

# THE (UN)HOLY ALLIANCE AT MEALS: SHAPING A RELATION BETWEEN FOOD, CONSCIENCE AND THE LAW

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## *Abstract*

It is commonly recognized that Mediterranean cultures show a certain level of accordance in their own lifestyles, customary rules, accepted affective values. This substantially correct scientific stance, however, easily turned into a caricatural position when that assumed collective framework is elevated to the standard of a universal rule. When the recognition of similarities implies to undervalue the importance of meaningful differences the cultural pattern does not work anymore. Keeping in mind this methodological prudence, it is a still fruitful hermeneutical experience to try to reach a structured study about the common roots in the qualified relationship between the not only symbolical sense of the food, Mediterranean heritages and confessional legal orders based on monotheism. Regarded from this point of view, the theme undoubtedly offers a historically founded influence of ethics and religions in conceiving a net of rules even in the mere act of eating. While often hidden, food is at the base of Mediterranean religiosities more a fact of discipline than a way of liberation: the ancient beliefs prescribed a deeply extensive series of rules to define the right time to eat and to avoid to eat (especially in, but not limited to, the Jewish tradition), the forbidden types of food and the licit ones, the universal condemnation of heathen uses, considered as blaspheme kinds of actions (this was an element absolutely peculiar, but again not exclusive, for Muslim scholars, thinkers and guiding personalities). It seems finally time to restart a different consideration, describing even a typical legal and formal approach, underlining the opportunity of a study on food, not hiding the duties and the virtues of cultural religious usages. The task is to step away from the barely coercive contents of them and to widen the sense of conviviality, dialogue and collaboration. The Jewish rituals on prayers and purification have meant an undeniable ethically directed reflection on the core sense of being clean, first of all, to ourselves: a personal interrogation with a not strictly confessional and religious element of self-critique. The first Christian communities adopted a joyful praxis of meals that expressed a vivid alternative to the aristocrats and their conception of common alimentary uses to establish relations of power in a hedonistic atmosphere of richness. The apparently more

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defined and stronger Islamic approach was also a positive revolution in giving the meals a different quality of collective presence: against the clan and tribe tendencies, the weakest were again admitted to the experience of eating together at least once a day. According to Albert Camus, if the most distinctive element of a Mediterranean behavior stands in its own warm attitude, what the biggest monotheistic cults realized at the time certainly was a not secondary brick to build that sense of conviviality.

*Keywords:* Mediterranean Sea, Islam, Jewish legal tradition, religious freedom, history of religions

*Methods and evolutions of a theme: ancestral and so current*

Food is not just about feeding our body. If we get this assumption considering a legal point of view, the meaning of the sentence is almost the same: it gets probably even deeper. The act of feeding ourselves is the immediate answer to a lot of more or less formally defined obligations: the healthcare, the prosecution of the species, the legitimacy of our rights, the elementary form of reaching a peaceful satisfaction of our primary needs. If just considered in a structured circle of legal obligations, however, the entire theme of food nutrition remains very vague: how to obtain pleasure from a duty? How to respect the duty without considering its proper component of choice, freedom, and self-realization, too? This is the very way the social formations have crossed to create collective practices of food eating: regular, sometimes solemn, often well normatively organized, but spontaneously ordered on the idea of a common occasion of conviviality. The communitarian element is not specifically able to overrule a basic individual stance (the right of eating,<sup>1</sup> the right of eating what we prefer, the right of doing this selection not by limiting the others and not by being limited by the others), but also the individual pleasure of eating has a peculiar root in the existence of a net of customary rules.

It could certainly seem apodictic, but the main thesis of this research consists in an original attitude across Mediterranean cultures to give the collective uses of food (and cooking, too) a general sense deserving the shaping of an institutional legal protection: a continuous combination of informal autonomous conducts and even traditionally or orally codified rules of social cohesion. In spite of huge doctrinal tendencies, trying to focalize on a specific theoretical framework able to include the evolution

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1 Taket, *Health Equity, Social Justice and Human Rights*, 19-21.

of the theme across countries and historical periods,<sup>2</sup> the task of this article will differently be to explain a catalogue of significant phases and case studies, without any attempt to recreate universal rules or all-encompassing figurative models. It is certainly an expositive limit to try not to give to give a guiding, static, and unmovable code, but our purpose, for the moment, is to get a very first overview concerning the collective rituals of food, embracing social changes and cultural customary praxes, even risking an ethical, individual, canon of justification. The vitality of evolutionary customs seems more important than a precise scheme,<sup>3</sup> because it makes possible to more directly consider singular events and attitudes. The thesis of the work consists in the recognition of a permanent convivial representation of common meals: we are not trying to find an archetype, but the expectation is to mention paradigmatic examples of that collective form of eating. The hospitality and the spontaneous, but somehow chaotic and hard-fought,<sup>4</sup> cultural turnover, typical in the Mediterranean history, are extraordinary sceneries to gather the sense of community and encounter, not always rational records, mainly immanent and not transcendent, but records of a type of thought, lifestyle, mentality. The rite of food implies a relationship with a special element characterizing that level of relation: it needs the shape of the intimacy, the recognition of mutual feelings, the birth of a sense of an equally perceived *dining table*, more immediate than strictly formalistic.<sup>5</sup> Protocols and ceremonials appear later: the substantial aim and the constitutive practice of a collective repast came much before; they cause a sense of community; they implicitly draw a border against the ones outside the perimeter of that conviviality.<sup>6</sup> In exercising this process religions were the most relevant actors.

Many of the religiously characterized kinds of food are now getting a level of general appreciation not specifically linked to their own proper theological base. Mediterranean regions were the ones most interested in the original development of these culinary styles, but the worldwide increasing trend of them is moderately happening. In some metropolitan

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2 This perspective includes the individuation of specific ways to prepare the meal, as distinctive parts of the human experience on the planet. A classical study, facing the importance of preparations based on the use of fire and cooking, is unanimously considered Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*.

3 Crowther, *Eating Culture. An Anthropological Guide to Food*, 9-11.

4 Kamen, *Early Modern European Society*, 240.

5 Mannur, *Intimate Eating. Racialized Spaces and Radical Futures*.

6 Then the extraneous reaches the different and unconceivable space of the dirt, the wrong, and the perilous, as noticed in Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*.

areas, such as Rome, Milan, Paris, several typical halal bars and restaurants have a concrete commercial success,<sup>7</sup> which reasonably came from an initial request taken on by migrants' communities.<sup>8</sup> It is widely justifiable even considering that the common reading against migrant groups (juvenile delinquents, so poor to mainly achieve their earnings by small illegal activities, almost complete ignorance of national official languages)<sup>9</sup> is false and not trustworthy. Second and third generation migrants, on the contrary, want to start smart economic enterprises:<sup>10</sup> the food market is open, modifiable, quick; a perfect form of short business to family companies, not highly learned manpower, ethnic little groupings. Kebab booths, Turkish style pizzerias, authorized retails, usually standing in station quarters or suburbs, have reached a widespread diffusion, intercepting the appreciation even from local middle and low classes residents: it is a predictable way to spread a culture, a first recognition of religiously and ethically born praxes, a new taste in intending the mass scale fast food satellite activities. This market-oriented tendency demonstrates, at least, a partial differentiation if compared to the strong orthodox approach preferred by the most intransigent religious opinions.

The structure of the critical point stands clear: what is advertised as halal food is not always rigidly halal, and that split is more unpleasant if related to a religiously comforting propaganda. Hence, the movement is dual: on the one hand, religiously based paradigms of food eating constantly meet a not only religious audience; on the other hand, their successful commercial capillarity makes them less credible to the more radical stalls of observant consumers. This condition does not regard peculiarly Islamic food prescriptions, though the issue, perhaps, gains, into Islamic public opinions, a stronger symbolical weight, and the aim of this research is not the purpose to uncover how halal traditions can be betrayed into a capitalistic organization of foreign food companies. Quite the opposite, the same concern has historically involved kosher practices, and every type of alimentary technique based on confessional and theological prerequisites. By now, the main element to underline, aside from a more exegetical discourse on authenticity in adopting religious etiquettes to not properly religious series of

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7 Farouk, "Overview on halal issues," 8.

8 Fischer, *The Halal frontier*.

9 Thus, the food market finally begins to be considered as an intercultural strategy to make the social security a real target of both individual and mutual economic activities. Rizzuto, "Le difficoltà di accesso al credito per l'impresa agraria multifunzionale".

10 Betts, *The Wealth of Refugees*.

products, is that the Mediterranean area was a fruitful crossroad to make different alimentary precepts coexisting, also in case of harsh religious and political conflicts.

*Paradigms of banqueting: Mediterranean Sea, cultures and religions*

The ideal type of meal emerging from the classical Mediterranean cultures was anyway and anyhow connoted by a concept of splendor, ostentation, and luxury. This did not mean that the sumptuous atmosphere regarded the entire population (we are talking about legal orders still permitting slavery, moreover, not only tolerating that, but almost explicitly giving the condition of slavery a peculiar basement in the system of production and domestic affairs). An imaginary is usually determined by the highest classes – at the time: aristocracy, military forces, conquerors, landowners, notable people from the magistratures, the nobility, and the commerce, too. Considering both the urbanistic and demographic elements, this part of the cities was absolutely a minority, even if a minority consistently by force, in the accepted social and juridical powers. The Greek culture generated at least two different paradigms of ideal meal – with a not common accent on the ritual and the mutual element of that.

The first one was about the Olympus:<sup>11</sup> goddesses always involved in libations, clashes, and frivolousness. The banquet unveiled its hypocrisy: fighting dining companions captured in the moment of their festive binge and orgies. The cupbearer was a solemn role: Ganymede was a master of ceremonies, not just a supporting actor. The other pattern was a more political one, because it did not represent the divine, but a typical human faction: the symposium.<sup>12</sup> It is widely agreed that the notorious collective factor was about drinking, and not eating, but the terms of the question do not significantly vary, at least in terms of human relationships and condition of equality and almost literally fraternity.<sup>13</sup> Between a confidential confraternity and an immaterial space to freely jointly talk, it was the smithy of the Greek thought on political discourse and artistic styles. The symposium paradigm was a pagan component of an identically heathen society, but it recaptures fragments also adopted by the monotheistic civilizations. It needed a condition of equal position between participants,

11 Sissa, Detienne, *La vita quotidiana degli dei greci*.

12 Lynch, *Symposium in Context*, 49-73.

13 Boisvert, *I Eat, Therefore I Think. Food and Philosophy*, 108-109.

although a guest of honor was usually invited.<sup>14</sup> The prevalent feeling was about unity and friendship, even tackling legal, political, and lyrical disputes; it sometimes even became the headquarters of a sedition, a coup, or a place to celebrate a conspiracy. Roman society introduced a different approach, except for an important case study we will separately consider. The framework of the banquet was mainly based on patronage. That point was a precise legal consequence: the prevalent net of juridical relationships was founded on a typical person. A man who has family, worths, lands, affairs, slaves; the center of the discourse on legal responsibility and contractual liberty;<sup>15</sup> the banquet was not a meal: it more correctly is the moment of alliances, confrontation between different patrimonial consistencies, public or private agreements. The expansion of the Roman Empire deepened this initial difference between the concept of eating in the ideal, frugal, original imaginary<sup>16</sup> and its concrete development in an empowered society. The patrician turned into a large-scale political lobbyist: the feast was his throne.

The sense of discontent could have been huge, spanning two different, but equally legitimate, critical perspectives. The axis of social justice was constant, but it has made more singular tumultuous protests emerge than effective political reform hypotheses. The conception of eating in the weakest classes was inferior, however never getting the level of a systematic change into cultural dominant patterns – monotheisms openly criticized the Roman emphasis on banqueting as a proper symbol of an evil (more than heathen) empire.<sup>17</sup> The poorest were not only formally excluded from this perception of power and strength. The lack of equality and freedom in the slow but incoming Roman political crisis was censured not only for the increasing evidence of troubling economic discriminations (the quest for a public law universal citizenship was exactly the other side of a rising dissatisfaction and even that claim was only tardively intercepted). The mentality assumed as a real force and expression of the ruling class seemed a constriction for the most fragile classes and created a partial, first, embryonic sense of opposition in a well-known, but not hegemonic part of the progressive side of the notables.

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14 Sheffield, *Plato's Symposium*, 202-203.

15 A classic point of view in Buckland, *A Manual of Roman Private Law*, 60-61; more recently, Consorti, *Introduzione allo studio del diritto canonico. Lezioni pisane*, 6-7.

16 Stolleis, *Storia del diritto pubblico in Germania*, 26-27.

17 This is a point of view typically developed in Paglia, *Storia della povertà*.

A Greece oriented group of intellectuals (since Gracchus, Horace, Catullus) introduced a humanist approach even in sharing common habits:<sup>18</sup> salacious, sensitive, less compromised in military affairs and public corruptions. It was not a strong radical opposition, but it certainly was the beginning of a new sensibility in conceiving both public and inner spheres of participation. It is not a case that this claim for literature, ethics and equity was well received by the subsequent emerging Christian belief, in the next two centuries, which a series of scholars on many issues not ascribable to an orthodox religious perspective, but forerunners of some aspects later defended even from a Christian point of view (forgiveness, hospitality, humility).<sup>19</sup> A different conception of conviviality was obviously a very part of the process.

If embracing a new religion (considering the revealed attitude of monotheisms we are talking about cults that aim to be the truth, the only real one) means to shape a religious form of community, it is obvious that the rituals of collective eating are not a merely figurative part of this sense of coexistence and faith. In a certain way, the mentioned Greek symposium could even share something in common with the intimacy, the secrecy and the confidentiality of the Christian meal in the period of the assemblies officiated into the catacombs. It obviously was not a political movement, but in its developing stage, the beginning of a collective thought about power was increasingly perceivable,<sup>20</sup> even if a social difference remained: a primarily aristocrat setting in Athens,<sup>21</sup> an interclass phase of evangelization in the early Christian Rome.<sup>22</sup>

In the development of a long-term substantial mechanism like that, many things happened and the Mediterranean area, even meeting different cultures, sometimes explicitly clashing with each other, started to demonstrate a common level of alimentary praxes. A Mediterranean diet, as formally codified or, at least, codifiable, by nutritionists,<sup>23</sup> was not properly univer-

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18 Reale, *Il pensiero antico*, 341.

19 Spiazzi, *Cristianesimo e cultura*, 124-125; Sordi, *I cristiani e l'Impero romano*, 194-195.

20 Duploux, "Pathways to Archaic Citizenship", 40-41.

21 This aspect is clearly linked to an unsurpassed critique of the elitist conception of the political constitution in the *polis* (a common juridical field between citizens, admitting slavery and treating in a different way the foreigners). This context emerges in a classical reader of the Ancient Greece urban society like Schmitt Pantel, *La Cité au Banquet. Histoire des repas publics dans les cités grecques*, 297-298.

22 Garrison, *Redemptive Almsgiving in Early Christianity*, 15-17.

23 Abenavoli, Procopio, Boccuto, "Nutrition and COVID-19 Pandemic: the case of Mediterranean diet", 648-649.

sally accepted, but a comprehensive scenario of similar food preferences absolutely affirmed its own prevalence.

*The space of the law and the role of the traditions: hermeneutical variables and opportunities*

This widely used variety was the very first base of a normally considered very recent definitional strategy to identify the Mediterranean diet (the syntagma has reached its recognizable meaning since the late Seventies). Main dishes and more frequent concrete nutritional choices were quite simple, but in a certain way effectively unique: plant-based general usage, a regular consumption of small and fresh fish, a mixture of legumes and more treated carbohydrates, a contained amount of meat (specifically limited to the red one, with a more permissive favor to the other ones).<sup>24</sup> It is not easy to clarify if religious precepts were favorite in their food duties thanks to the general alimentary regime. Dynamics may vary and it is probable that both the elements have influenced each other: the confessional prescriptions in detail described a table of practices changing and modelling everyday consumption of food; on the other hand, those rules were part of a cultural and popular condition where some specific tendencies and preferences were already common, acceptable, and respected.

Religions forced the scenery introducing meticulous food norms, the most of them absolutely not textually in the original religious legal sources.<sup>25</sup> This type of development is predictable, understandable, known, and probably almost totally recognized by scholars (even the legal ones). Legal disciplines on food mean a kind of community where it is fruitful and necessary to apply them and both restrictions and concessions are peculiarly observed by the people because of the importance of food in every single individual and collective aspect of life. Our research does not concern these elements, but we can notice in the described evolution a similarity with legally permitted sexual behaviors.<sup>26</sup>

Many authors have expressed the same question about it: why did religions, born to give humankind immediate prescriptions to preserve the safeguard of the souls, often want to conceive complicated regulations, sharp

24 Abenavoli, Milic, Peta, Alfieri, De Lorenzo, Bellentani, "Alimentary Regimen in non-alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease: Mediterranean Diet," 16831-16840.

25 Fuccillo, *Il cibo degli Dei*, 70-81.

26 Caputo, *Introduzione allo studio del diritto canonico moderno*, VII; Ferrari, *Status giuridico e orientamento sessuale*, 19-20.



prohibitions, and articulate limits?<sup>27</sup> Was it really the best argumentative and theological strategy to defend the concepts of bliss and beatitude? If we want to retrace a relevant hermeneutical Canon law controversy (with some echoes in both Islamic and Jewish laws),<sup>28</sup> the universal framework of this formulated question consists in the relation between religious salvation and the law. Are the widening of positively recognized rights and the constant stratification of rules allies in reaching the salvation? Is it sustainable that the excess of written rules is an enemy, a contorted and controversial human argumentation very far from the evidence of God, the revelation, and the divine law? Accepting the risk of being too brief and apologetic, a balanced point of reasoning could probably be to admit that the law needs an appropriate level of accuracy, particularly when talking about confessional legal orders, and a superficial sense of obscuring the formal element from the religious practices is not the right strategy.<sup>29</sup> The opposite solution is insufficient, as well: the overproduction of semi-administrative rules is a symptom of bureaucracy, that is to say a secular mentality normally extraneous to the idea of religious belonging.<sup>30</sup>

Religious prescriptions on food and beverage nevertheless evolved not just because we are living a consumerist lifestyle. The current and generally more tolerant and indulgent application is based on a different purpose: the difficulties of a slavish reiteration and the opportunities to put compliance and forgiveness near each other focusing only on the main and the most restrictive bans, usually the most important and the less dispensable ones. We will easily verify that behind this series of theologically founded hard limits, the preservation of already applied traditions stands still, describing in the Mediterranean zone a legal framework, quite hospitable to cultural differences, acceptable conditions of religious freedom, and conservation of food customs.

### *Between ethics and prohibitions: case studies and some conclusions*

Two interesting prohibitions seem to reach a substantial consensus in the experience of organized Abrahamic religions, even considering a partial reconsideration in Catholic theology through centuries: the ban of pork

27 Jobani, *The Role of Contradictions in Spinoza's Philosophy*, 66-69; Hashemi, *Religious Legal Traditions, International Human Rights Law and Muslim States*, 93-98.

28 Blankenship, *The Divine Law. Religion and Christianity*, 100-102; Hayes, *What's Divine about Divine Law?*, 6-10.

29 Berlingò, *Giustizia e carità nell'economia della Chiesa*, 44-57.

30 Barberini, Canonico, *Elementi essenziali dell'ordinamento canonico*, 100-102.

meat and the idiosyncratic repulsion against the alimentary use of blood. We will primarily consider the Roman Catholic position just because the already faded prohibition still effects somehow the common perception (it does not obligate anymore, but its original scriptural foundations have peculiar projections in religious cultures). Pigs are associated with demons due to a strictly literal interpretation of the gospel referred to the episode of Jesus driving away evil spirits, by moving them in a pig herd thrown from a precipice.<sup>31</sup> That scene probably had a significant role in a basically Jewish audience (a community used to consider pigs with disdain: Jesus is a Jew, his human roots were founded in that context of religious convictions and convections).<sup>32</sup> The ban concerning the use of blood for eating and cooking is even more radical. The scriptural sense probably was about the importance of leaving behind violent revenges, wars, and assassinations. The meaning assumed since the first communities appeared much more literal, and it still shows its consequences in other religions, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses.<sup>33</sup> For them, the scriptural sense was enormously emphasized to disapprove even the blood transfusions – quite strangely, that was a medical procedure ignored at the time of Jesus.<sup>34</sup> As we will soon verify, anyway, both Islamic and Jewish law scholars elaborated an articulate definition of rules to conceive an effective implementation of those limits and prohibitions.

Monotheisms keep a paternalistic view of God, also when they consider him in a position of total domination of humankind. A meat prohibition against both pork and boar, not differently from ritual prescriptions about the sacrifice of the fast (penance, sacred offering to God, health habit), was justified by hygienic motivations: pigs and wild boars snuffle and eat everything, even unhealthy garbage. The inner connection between impurity and blood is clearer in many other hypotheses: Islamic law forbids carnivorous beasts and predator birds, because they eat other living beings, drinking and assuming their blood. Seafood prohibitions are more difficult to correctly understand, uniting elements of superstition, common fear and, however, a permanent attention on a good health religious perspective. The Mediterranean cuisine has probably a partial influence on it, but those bans involve not only extraneous or uncommon kinds of

31 France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 341-342; Hauw, *The Function of Exorcism Stories in Mark's Gospel*, 47-48.

32 Calimani, *Gesù ebreo*; Melli, *L'ebraicità di Gesù e dei Vangeli*.

33 Knox, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Secular World*, 234-236.

34 On that often jurisdictional conflict, Dalla Torre, *Lezioni di diritto ecclesiastico*, 68.

seafood (sharks and whales): they extend their efficacy also on typical regional fish such as squids and swordfish. The bond of derivation from the blood somehow survives as it is maintained to discipline the licit use of fish ova (licit, if it is licit the entire fish itself). Fishes have to come out alive from the water – they cannot be “carcasses” – and the type of fishing is normally irrelevant, in part because, especially in the poorest sea areas, these types are various but simple and not predatory. Unsurprisingly, the exegetical debate on the use of shrimps is open: it is the sign of a concretely evolutionary doctrinal confrontation, also on apparently less significant aspects.

Christian bans are now very limited: everyday applications seem already diminishing, less important than it was in the past. Jewish legal schools are more intense about it, in line with the Arab-Islamic sensibilities (their limitations, if they still show a relationship with the Mediterranean regional territories, are often based on customary rules deriving from internal not maritime Middle East zones). This not the priority element of our analysis, but an opportune reference should be made to the long-standing quarrel about the habit of drinking wine: Muslims reject it almost completely,<sup>35</sup> though Eastern European communities sometimes defend the possibility of it,<sup>36</sup> arguing that this use was local long before the Islam proselytism and dominance; moderate legal schools think that a quantity not able to change human mind could abstractly be considered safe; Christians and Jews have overruled the existence of an assumed biblical ban, and they just limit their condemnation to abuses and not ritual preparations. Wine is a symbol of paganism and alteration,<sup>37</sup> but it is a typical Mediterranean product, too: where is the balancing point in the religious obligation of preserving a safe body and a sage mind, as established by the scriptural commandments?

About the meat consumption, Judaism appears more complete, because it recreates an entire table of specific alimentary rules starting from a peculiar licit conception of meat usage. A consistent majority of rabbinic opinions is ongoing in forbidding the hunting game in its entirety. The main impression is a general sense of distrust and disgrace about the hunting activities, though some winged animals are traditionally permitted also due to their substantially easy and frequent attainability (for instance, the goose is not considered a bird of prey). The most demanding task obviously consists not in a formal identification of the kosher food, but in a detailed

35 A graduation of perspectives in Fatoohi, *Abrogation in the Qur'an and Islamic Law*, 100-101.

36 Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way*, 246.

37 An overview on the Christian transition in Unwin, *Wine and the Vine*, 142-144.

technique of butchery and slaughter.<sup>38</sup> Ecological tendencies, in the Jewish doctrines, reconnect this attention to a religious oriented approach between humankind and animals, modeled in order to avoid useless cruelties and violent praxes: this progressive interpretation, however, is not always accepted, through the presence of precise rabbinic references.<sup>39</sup>

Jewish cuisine, as much as the previously mentioned Islamic law prohibitions and lately softened Christian ones, is a good litmus test to reveal the adaptive nature of the Mediterranean crossing-cultures food experience: a sapient mixture of the preservation of beliefs and the acceptance of thinner borders between communities. Especially in cities characterized by huge and dating ghettos, food preparations, accounted for the respect of Jewish legal limits, are now part of a wide regional food tradition: universally, not only specifically religiously compatible – that phenomenon is frequent in Tuscany, as well in Rome and Venice.<sup>40</sup>

It is undoubtedly clear that religious prescriptions have had a significant role in increasing the common relevance of confessional orders in everyday life, because they represented the concrete application of theological principles and precepts otherwise destined to disappear, if perceived just as coercive and distant rules.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, it is true, too, that the exactly opposite dynamics were anyway enforcing the sense of belonging and believing. Nutritional advertisings were easier to be applied, if linked to a universally recognized ethical and healthcare framework. Religious precepts and even more cultural customs stand still much more than the secularization penetrated in confessional legal orders: to survive a warm interpretation of a principle of adaptability is fundamental,<sup>42</sup> in addition to an ongoing Mediterranean inclusive attitude.<sup>43</sup>

Elements linked to food and its subsequent collective practices (not only intending the wealth and health affairs, but also considering specific rituals, modes and trends, continuously evolving and safeguarding a stable orientation) will probably be maintained correctly, according to the incisive research of the historian of religions Paolo Scarpi.<sup>44</sup> In a collection of selected essays, food does not appear as a basic form of union between God

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38 Toselli, *Kosher, halal, bio*, 83-84.

39 Tabory, "The Legitimacy of Reform Judaism: the Impact of Israel on the United States", 222-223.

40 Toaff, *Mangiare alla Giudia*.

41 Magri, *Dal volto alla maschera*, 149-151.

42 Boff, *Faith on the Edge: Religion and Marginalized Existence*, 13.

43 Foxlee, *Albert Camus's The New Mediterranean Culture*, 51-73.

44 Scarpi, *Il senso del cibo*.

and humankind (the nutrition as a grace of God is anyway a very accepted topic in religious exegesis): it reveals its real significance in representing the most effective connection between human beings and the reality surrounding them in everyday life. In its true and even rough co-presence with the most concrete phenomena of life, food usage simultaneously shows more importantly the marker of an always establishing and reinventing community.

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