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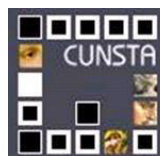
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Food and Jesuits in the Early Modern Western World

Claudio Ferlan*

Abstract

The large number of Jesuit studies have failed to give due attention to the link between the order and food. This simple point, which I shall try to substantiate in what follows, explains why I have thought fit to propose some areas for research, on the basis of my own investigation, trends in historiography and, last but not least, Jesuit sources (published and otherwise). Starting with an analysis of the ideas connected with historical food studies, I will focus on the Jesuits over a time-span from the 1530s to the second half of the eighteenth century, going deeper into the issue of moderation (first part) and the dietary model that developed within the Society of Jesus (second part). I shall adopt an interdisciplinary perspective, with special attention to the contribution of anthropology.

Nella notevole quantità di studi relativi alla Compagnia di Gesù non ha ancora acquisito uno spazio adeguato la questione del legame tra l'ordine e l'alimentazione. Questa semplice considerazione, che cercherò di precisare nelle pagine che seguono, è la ragione per cui mi è parso opportuno proporre alcune possibili prospettive di ricerca, sulla base di indagini personali, linee storiografiche, e, non ultime, fonti gesuitiche (edite e inedite). Partendo

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da un'analisi dei concetti storiografici legati ai *food studies*, mi concentrerò sull'ambito gesuitico in uno spazio cronologico compreso tra gli anni Trenta del XVI secolo e la seconda metà del XVIII secolo, approfondendo il tema della moderazione (prima parte) e il modello dell'alimentazione sviluppato all'interno della *Society of Jesus* (seconda parte), utilizzando una prospettiva interdisciplinare, attenta soprattutto ai contributi dell'antropologia.

My first objective in this essay is to analyse certain essential aspects of negotiation between individuals and cultural models by means of studying specific food habits. Such negotiations first of all involve the dietary rules governing the Catholic lifestyle: fasting, abstinence and the relation between food and medicine. The first part of the essay will cover these points (a medical-cum-moral field). But other aspects should equally be borne in mind, primarily the significance of dining together, which I shall develop in the second part of the article (a cultural field). My methodological stance is that of connected history, which entails decompartmentalising the viewpoint (*décloisonnement du regard*)¹, as well as widening the geographical scope. In our case, this means the area comprised by the Jesuit Assistances – Italian, Spanish and Portuguese – as conveyed by the expression in my title: «Early Modern Western World». As the growth of Jesuit studies has made clear, the Society of Jesus, a missionary order par excellence, affords a window onto, and link between, Europe and the other continents, and this certainly applies to food culture².

My second aim is to integrate the archive and documentary sources with the latest methodological thinking on food and Jesuit studies. Drawing on original research, I will try and suggest some relevant potential research avenues which, I hope, will contribute to the ongoing historiographic debate.

I have mentioned “food culture”, an expression that needs clarifying. “Food” means so many things. Hence our first task must be to select our fields for investigation within such a capacious container. The members of the Association for the Study of Food and Society, «founded in 1985, with the goals of promoting the interdisciplinary study of food and societies»³, have recently been debating the definition of “cuisine” itself. This I think forms an ideal starting point in establishing a conceptual grid to guide our thoughts on food and the Jesuits. We begin from the obvious but necessary reflection that, since food is indispensable for any form of human life, every society has devised its own way or system of giving significance to food. At the same time, there

¹ Gruzinski 2001; Bertrand 2013; Douki, Minard, 2007.

² For possible developments in the history of Jesuit food culture from a “connected history” perspective, see Ferlan 2017a. For developments in religious food history, see: Clafin 2012; Pilcher 2016; Ferlan 2018c.

³ <<http://www.food-culture.org/>>, 10.12.2018. The Association organizes an annual meeting and several seminars, as well as producing the quarterly journal «Food, Culture and Society».

is no limit to the manners in which such systems can take shape: the ways of preparing and consuming food are infinite and constantly evolving. Like languages, like forms of government, cuisines overlap; they intersect, change and inter-communicate. They are a system of rules, a community fact and an object of knowledge. For those reasons, they are inextricably bound up with the social structures that constitute communication networks⁴.

At the same time, cuisines are a combination of foodstuffs (ingredients), dishes (ingredients transformed through specific procedures) and meals (culturally recognized eating events). But that is not all. There are other elements, which go beyond cuisine: diet, for example. Diet is not just an abstraction for the total of what an individual or a group eat over a specific period, but also a concept that changes from one culture to the next. It may refer to the medical rules for daily living or the connection between the individual and the surrounding environment⁵. Moreover, there are rules, controversies, calendars to respect, economic requirements, moments to share. For this reason, I prefer when speaking of Jesuits to use the concept of food culture to refer to food customs and values shared by a community. What is typical of the Jesuits in any discussion of food culture of the early modern age cannot lie in individual ingredients or ways of cooking. The order was stationed in most of the known world: the characteristics of the Jesuit diet are to be seen not in local particulars, but in common cultural features. Thus, unlike a universal foodstuff such as chocolate, the capillary distribution of which is borne out by documents from all over the Jesuit West, there are foodstuffs that are specific or exclusive to certain places. Local differences are part of the Jesuits' culinary contribution to the various regional recipe traditions, such as the abundance of fish in the Venetian province or the use of iguana meat in the Peruvian one⁶, but however interesting, they are not enough to support an overarching argument. Hence, just as Jesuit food culture needs to be linked to a large range of ingredients, so the negotiations mentioned between individuals (superiors and subordinates when it comes to fasting and abstinence) may take many differing forms, according to the time and place at which we observe them.

One wonders at this point: does there exist a food culture peculiar to the early modern Society of Jesus, regardless of where its members may be stationed in their mission to the four corners of the earth? David Gentilcore has shown how

⁴ To clarify the terms of the discussion we should refer to the works of certain scholars who have contributed to it: Scholliers 2009, pp. XI-XIV and 1-30 (there is also an interesting preface by K. Albala, pp. VII-VIII, to the brief outline in the series "Food Culture around the World" by the Greenwood Press); Buccini 2016; Laudan 2016, in particular pp. 446-448; by Laudan see also <<http://www.rachellaudan.com/2017/02/19542.html>>, 05.07.2019.

⁵ Montanari 2011, p. 80.

⁶ A key source for our purposes is in Rome, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), Veneta 93, *Capitoli delle consuetudini generali*, cc. 1v-49v; the reference to iguana is in Acosta 1590, Book IV, Chap. XXXVIII.

Roman Jesuits «initiated a new dietary style, in terms of both meal structure and content, that is recognisably ‘Italian’ (at least at a privileged level)». In his view, that style was based on medical knowledge of the period that he had studied, the second half of the 17th century, and matched the economic means of the upper classes to which the Jesuits in his research belonged⁷. As we said, the documents give us a chance to assess any local differences, and also to broaden the field of enquiry into whether the Society of Jesus contributed to defining dietary models. But if we wish to go beyond analysis of cuisine and explore the field of food culture, I feel that what is truly recognizable about a Jesuit way of nutrition is more than the set of ingredients (foodstuffs) used in preparing meals, and consists in the culture underpinning such cooking, which Gentilcore rightly traces to medical science.

1. *Moderation*

1.1 *In eating*

A concern with moderation is basic to Ignatius’ remarks on diet which would prove a cornerstone of the Society’s food culture⁸. Let us begin with the Spiritual Exercises where looking after the health of those giving them was fundamental. Loyola recommended the spiritual director to let the practitioner eat what he requested. He suggested that whoever divided the portions and took the food around should ask what everyone wanted for their next meal, and to comply with that wish. It was rightly thought that how one ate closely affected one’s mood. Nourishment and spiritual disposition were strictly connected so that, while sobriety was called for, the individual’s nature should be catered to without exaggeration either in excess or in defect. Another of Ignatius’ Directives clarified that indulgence of the practitioner’s appetites should be guided so as not to lose sight of discipline: it was admissible for the practitioner to ask for a better meal than usual (chicken, for example), or ordinary fare, or merely bread, water and wine. This was to be granted, provided all excess was avoided whether by surfeit or by privation⁹. It boiled down to a heartfelt plea for balance, achievable by moderate conduct without any exaggeration. This was perfectly in line with medical belief at the time, as shown by Gentilcore’s already cited study.

⁷ Gentilcore 2010, p. 87.

⁸ Ferlan 2017b.

⁹ Ignatius de Loyola 1969: *Directorium*, pp. 79-81 and *Alterum Directorium*, pp. 81-87.

The basic idea dated back to the Greek physician Galen (dates 129 to 200 or 216 AD) whose reference was Hippocrates (c. 460-377 BC). The prime rule of diet was that everyone should eat in accord with their own characteristics: age, gender, state of health, kind of activity, environmental and living conditions. Another factor then came into play: the humoral complexion, which was common to all living beings in principle, but in its combinations defined the individual's make-up. It depended on the interaction of four factors linked in pairs: hot/cold, and dry/moist. Each of these corresponded to a basic element, namely fire (hot), air (cold), earth (dry) and water (wet). Good health lay in the appropriate juxtaposition of the factors. This involved proper nutrition, such as to help the search for balance: for instance, by preparing hot foods for those of a cold temperament. Foodstuffs such as wine and meat were thought to have the power to warm the body, especially male, and stimulate sexual appetite: for which reason fasting was considered a basic deterrent to the sin of lust. Cuisine ensured the balance of ingredients¹⁰. Ancient medical knowledge had partly determined the Rule of St Benedict in which there was an evident belief that meat served to provide strength, for which reason one should abstain from it unless one was sick or particularly weak¹¹.

From the start the Jesuit diet took account of Galenic medical opinion and left some room for individual features, providing different options in one and the same meal and recommending a proper quantity and variety of foodstuffs as deemed necessary for leading an active life – something expected of the Ignatian order's members¹².

Apart from their principle of eschewing excess or privation, the Spiritual Exercises made detailed reference to food in their eight rules for moderation in eating¹³. Ignatius began by praising bread, *the* nutriment of Mediterranean and Christian culture, in view of its symbolic and nutritional properties¹⁴. Ignatius believed one could eat plenty of bread since it caused no unseemly appetites and did not tempt. Abstaining from drinking he considered fairly easy: sufficient to behave with due equilibrium. That view was, and would be, belied by the facts. More enticing, to his mind, were the pleasures of the table. To escape its snares one needed to get used to ordinary fare, and if one could not do without sophisticated foods, to be modest in one's consumption of them. Loyola went on to stress the need to avoid undue mortification, a central tenet in Jesuit food culture to which we shall be returning later. To assist with moderation, he suggested that, as one ate, one's mind's eye might visualize Jesus and the apostles and note their behaviour. Or one might turn one's thoughts to the

¹⁰ Albala 2002, pp. 48-77; Gentilcore 2015, pp. 12-22.

¹¹ *Regula Benedicti*, 39; Montanari 1988, pp. 24-25, 47-48, 63-71.

¹² Some introductory information on the "Jesuit diet" is to be found in Martinoli Santini 1996, Breccia Fratadocchi 1996.

¹³ Ignatius de Loyola 1955, NN. 210-217.

¹⁴ Assouly 2002, chap. 2, par. 1.

lives of the saints, pious topics of contemplation or spiritual deeds. All such remedies sought to keep food in its proper place, simple upkeep rather than bodily pleasure¹⁵. One should not concentrate on what one was eating, thus remaining in command of the pace and size of the meal. The last rule suggested a ploy for moderating the intake: to make up one's mind how much to eat for the next meal at a moment when hunger was sated, and stick strictly to the amount decided. The advice was good, since when appetite is removed, one is content with little.

1.2 *In drinking*

Early modern food culture paid special attention to alcoholic beverages, to be drunk in moderation as the doctors recommended. Regardless of its scriptural or liturgical connotations, wine formed a basic part of the diet for its nutritional and alleged medicinal properties¹⁶. The medical advice Ignatius received to offset his own health problems took account of wine: it was best avoided though such advice was in practice inapplicable; the solution to the dilemma was to indicate which kinds of wine to shun and which to accept. The first documentary evidence of Ignatius' diet probably dates from 1547 with a list of forbidden and allowed foodstuffs. There was a notable ban on wine, but no details as to the use of water on which, it was written, the doctor preferred to speak to the patient in person. This was probably because water was viewed with suspicion in that age for health reasons: it was thought harmful in its very nature, cold and wet; and it may well have been polluted and unhealthy indeed¹⁷. The second document presumably dates from 1554 and shows a change of attitude to wine. First, certain types were banned (young, cloudy or strong), then it was thought better to do without, and then the admission that, if one must go on drinking, exclusively on doctor's orders, let it be light, correctly matured (neither young nor aged) and with a good "nose"¹⁸.

The advice was perfectly in line with contemporary medical opinion which is nicely summarized by the Venetian Luigi Cornaro's successful work *Discorsi sulla vita sobria* (*Discourse on the life of sobriety*, 1588)¹⁹. This text wholeheartedly praises the virtues of moderation yet does not suggest avoiding wine so much as achieving the right intake. The traditional health recommendations tied consumption to type of consumer, season of the year, age, gender and the drinker's humoral make-up. The types of wine to avoid were young or long matured (which was just the advice Ignatius received) and

¹⁵ D'Ambrosio 2006, pp. 278-279.

¹⁶ Gentilcore 2010, pp. 96-98.

¹⁷ Flandrin 2011, p. 481.

¹⁸ The two documents are in Ignatius de Loyola 1977, pp. 666-667; 686-688.

¹⁹ Gullino 1983.

one should make sure to balance its hot nature by mixing it with water²⁰. Thus the pupils at the Collegium Romanum (1551) were allowed wine in moderation if heavily watered down²¹. A few years later (1561) the Jesuits at the Evora college did not receive the same license, consumption of wine being restricted to celebration of the Mass or doctor's prescription²².

Although Ignatius in the Exercises thought abstention from alcohol was easy, in administering the conduct of his fellow brethren he realized this was not exactly true. In the general context of proper frugality at table, Ignatius wrote (12th May 1556) to the Louvain rector Adrian Adriaenssens (1520-1580) that, though renunciation was praiseworthy, it should never be to the detriment of health; the doctor's recommendations must be followed. The strong should rest content with the least expensive food and drink, though abstention should not be carried to excess. As for alcohol, Ignatius left the option of drinking simple water, beer or cider where such was the common beverage and appropriately substituted for wine, which might cost too much for reasons of quality and importation. The picture changed for the weak or frail in health: in such cases, ordinary food was not advised, and in its place a diet was designed to build up bodily health. The important thing was not to grow accustomed to superfluity, and not to show openly that someone might deserve special treatment, so as not to cause jealousy or scandal²³. The rules were taken literally – too much so. In 1567 Jerónimo Nadal (1507-1580) was forced to send orders to the Fathers of the Flemish college to abolish the practice of keeping beer in a special place to which anyone dining might go whenever thirst prompted. The habit must be changed: a guard was to be set over the store, and should follow the prefect or deputy prefect's instructions concerning individual permits; careful note should be taken of any excesses²⁴.

Where regulation of alcoholic liquor was concerned, we note local differences in the cultivation of moderation. Evidently cuisine and food culture are not just about what one eats, but what one drinks. Vincenzo Carafa (1585-1649, General from 1646 to 1649) wrote in 1646 to the Austrian Provincial to set rules for beer consumption, strictly between meals. In the detailed report by Visitor Giovanni Battista Carminata (1536-1619) to the Polish college of Jarosław, the need to contain beer consumption suggested rationing it on ordinary occasions and during Lent, while a watch must be kept on the barrels (1581)²⁵.

If we shift our sights across the Atlantic, the same Father Carafa sent a circular to all the Provincials of the Indies insisting on a few rules as to chocolate consumption. The subject had been debated for decades and was significantly

²⁰ Lecoutre 2011, pp. 175-179.

²¹ Lukács 1965, p. 82.

²² Lukács 1974b, p. 297.

²³ Ignazio di Loyola 1977, p. 758.

²⁴ Lukács 1974b, p. 145.

²⁵ See respectively ARSI, Epp Nostrorum 120-II, c. 352; ARSI, Polonia 5, cc. 5r-10v.

dressed up as the need to encourage temperance and mortification. In 1639 the Mexican provincial congregation received a memorandum on chocolate in which remedies were suggested to avoid untoward consumption. We learn from the document what the problems were: apart from breach of moderation, there was a habit among young Jesuits of drinking it off the premises, leading to illicit and even dissolute gatherings. It provided a dangerous excuse for people keeping unduly close ties to their families who were in the habit of making gifts. It could also cause friction between those enjoying a dispensation on health grounds to exceed the once-a-day allowance and those who were bound by that rule. Lastly, it involved undue expense, not just to purchase the beverage itself, but for the accessories required in preparing and consuming it. General Vitelleschi praised the resolutions in the memorandum and added a few comments. He stressed the need for moderation (including the economic side) and for vigilance as to what was going on in-house, and not granting permission for bingeing during outings²⁶. As with alcoholic beverages, chocolate was seen as a cause of deviant and dissolute behaviour, much like beer in central and eastern Europe.

Studying what might be called a moral assessment of alcoholic and other stimulants may be a suitable opening for connected history research as I have already attempted with maté. In that case I showed how the stimulating liquor typically consumed in Guaraní food culture raised disciplinary problems similar to the case of beer in Austrian and Polish provinces. As the frontiers of evangelization broadened, so the Jesuit missionaries focused more and more on dietary customs, seeking answers to various issues that had points in common²⁷. Likewise, distribution of food and drink, and the dynamics of gifts coming into Jesuit houses from outside may be an interesting cue for studying relations between Jesuits of all ranks and orders, and the Fathers' home background and previous social circle (friends and acquaintances). This last example inclines me to highlight one of the many aspects of Jesuit food history that might be explored in future. I shall return to these in what follows, and list some possible research questions.

To conclude the issue of moderation in drinking, one of the most commonly studied subjects in connection with the Society of Jesus and food history is the topic of drunkenness among American natives. The phenomenon was sometimes overstated in colonial literature and mission correspondence²⁸. Europeans have frequently noted the custom of heavy alcohol drinking on ritual occasions as one of the worst obstacles to evangelization, so that eagerness to regulate it bulked large on the missionaries' agenda. For instance, José de Acosta (1540-1600) wrote that curbing drunkenness was an urgent challenge facing the missionary. That belief stemmed from Acosta's personal experience:

²⁶ See respectively ARSI, Epp Nostrorum 120-II, c. 311; ARSI Congregationes 67, cc. 174r.176r.

²⁷ Ferlan 2017a.

²⁸ Corcuera de Mancera 1991; Saignes 1993; Azevedo Fernandes 2011; Morales 2012.

he had witnessed colossal binge drinking by natives, degenerating into brawls that proved fatal. He added that Spanish merchants were partly to blame for such tragedies since they ignored bans on the sale of alcohol simply out of greed for profit. Moderation should be advocated by preachers, Acosta explained, especially concerning public drinking. On private drinking one might turn a blind eye²⁹.

When they landed in America, the Fathers sought at once to change the natives' habits; they tried (and failed) to persuade them that their liquor was pernicious, whereas wine symbolized the Christian sacrifice. It is hardly surprising to hear of the natives' puzzlement at the inconsistency. As with food culture in general, so the locals' attitude to drunkenness changed radically after the encounter with Europeans, giving rise to some unexpected and unimaginable twists. The first was a new "take" on the concept of drunkenness: for European culture this meant the amount of alcohol consumed; for the natives (throughout Latin America) it was linked to the place and manner of drinking bouts. Thus, the natives going on with alcohol consumption after the so called spiritual conquest might be interpreted as a desire to defend the past culture and show how former beliefs still lingered on³⁰.

1.3 *In privation*

While moderation in eating and drinking was a typical feature of all early-modern religious communities, moderation in self-sacrifice was another matter. On this Ignatius Loyola would lead the debate. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (rightly in my view) picks out this feature as typifying the Jesuit identity: «The Society introduced several innovations in the form of the religious life. Among these were the discontinuance of many medieval practices – such as regular penances or fasts obligatory on all, a common uniform, and choral recitation of the liturgical office – in the interest of greater mobility and adaptability»³¹. It is interesting to note how for brevity's sake a work like the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* emphasises the question of regulating food intake as a prime feature of the Jesuit order. Such discipline struck contemporaries, though it was not exactly new. One by no means isolated case in point was Bishop Santo Domingo Andrés de Carvajal's remark to José de Acosta that he had his suspicions of the Jesuits: for were they not accustomed to dress and eat in a refined manner?³².

Interestingly, reflection on the mid-16th century dietary recommendations suggests a possible parallel between Luther and Ignatius. Both were convinced of the need for «moderation in privation», as I have termed it, though the

²⁹ See for instance Acosta 1670, Book III, Chap. XX, XXI, XXII.

³⁰ This perspective is developed in Ferlan 2018a, pp. 93-100; see also Hailwood 2016.

³¹ <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Jesuits>>, 10.12.2018.

³² Mateos 1954, pp. 254-260.

manner of expressing that conviction differed. When still a Catholic monk the Wittenberg reformer was by no means for reducing the time devoted to prayer. But as he rose in his academic career and took on more and more public and writing duties, the time available decreased dramatically. So he devised a solution: he would periodically go without eating and drinking in order to devote himself to prayer. The result was far from comforting: persistent headaches, dull disorientation, bewilderment bordering on madness. In the words of the father of the Reformation, «our Lord God shook me with some violence out of that bloodbath of prayer»³³. Luther was not against fasting as such but the fact of it being imposed by Rome as an obligation. That conclusion, like his fulminations against indulgences and other clerical malpractices, helped bring about a rift that would long underlie the clash among Christians in many places³⁴.

In the period immediately after his conversion Ignatius too imposed the most austere diets on himself. In his so-called Autobiography what stands out so vividly is the interior torment of his stay at Manresa, at times tempting him to suicide. Ignatius recalled how he concentrated on the story of a saint who, ardently desiring God would grant him a particular request, fasted in expectation of receiving it. The course of action appealed to Loyola and he decided to follow suit. The urge to renunciation corresponded with a plan to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, during which he would subject himself to stringent privations and feed on herbs alone. He also planned to continue the herb diet once his pilgrimage was over and he went on retreat (amid constant doubts) at the charterhouse of Seville³⁵. He stuck to his vow for eight days, at which point his confessor ordered him to break his fast. After several days of wretchedness, Loyola understood by divine enlightenment that he should no longer torment himself over the sins of his life to date³⁶. He did continue to abstain from meat until, upon waking, he was confronted with a dish of it ready for the eating. What he then experienced was a strange doubling effect: while his bodily eyes transmitted no desire to eat, «a great consent of the will» (*un grande asenso de la voluntad*) bade him to do so freely. On talking it over with his confessor, he understood quite clearly that he should follow the bidding of that consent of the will, and he ate³⁷.

The severe restrictions Loyola imposed on himself in the period of his conversion left two significant legacies: persistent pain in the stomach, cyclically becoming acute, which would be with him till he died³⁸; secondly, the conviction that the rules of fasting should be observed only insofar as they ensured perfect

³³ «Also zoch mich unser herr Got vi quadam ab illa carnificina orandi»: Luther M. 1912, N. 495, pp. 220-221.

³⁴ Grumett, Muers 2010, p. 55; Albala 2011, p. 42.

³⁵ Ignatius de Loyola 1904, NN. 8, 9, 12.

³⁶ Ignatius de Loyola 1904, NN. 24-25; García Hernán 2013, pp. 128-131.

³⁷ Ignatius de Loyola 1904, N. 27.

³⁸ As he relates, for example, during his stay in Paris, cf. Ignatius de Loyola 1904, N. 84.

balance of physical and mental health. He realized, in short, that a body undergoing undue privations could not be expected to carry out the labours required of the Jesuit life: preaching, evangelizing and, in due course, teaching.

This belief is clearly expressed in his correspondence and the Constitutions. In a letter to Francesco Borgia (1510-1572) dated 20th September 1548, Ignatius praised his conduct as being geared to spiritual advancement. But he also cautioned him not to overdo the fasting, and especially abstinence. He should look after his body, the stomach in particular, making sure to strengthen and not debilitate it. A weak physique would not allow the spirit to perform properly. To a fellow priest Loyola admitted he had overdone the rigour and was still paying the price. His stomach was no longer able to function normally and had difficulty in digesting even small quantities of food³⁹. We have already mentioned his advice to the Louvain confraternity about moderating their drinking but also their self-sacrifices. Another instance of that attitude is stressed in the Rules for the Collegium Romanum (1551), drawn up by Father Polanco (1517-1576). The Rector was to have the task of supervising the pupils' fasting if they wished to exceed the standard discipline the prescribed discipline; before allowing too austere a diet, the Rector should weigh their personal aptitude, hence their physical and spiritual health. The recommendation was confirmed the following year for the pupils of the Collegium Germanicum, and would reappear in many later rule books⁴⁰.

Being moderate in self-sacrifice certainly implied no license to exaggerate. This is clearly laid down in the Constitutions. Candidates for admission to the Society had to go on a month's pilgrimage without money, so as to get used (among other things) to eating badly and sleeping roughly⁴¹. The would-be Jesuit's fare should be suited to the poor. Those already admitted, the Constitutions prescribed, should eat poorly but adequately. Once again, the aim was to prevent austerity from damaging the health: fasts, vigils and other rigorous behavior were fine, but should not take up too much time or weaken the individual's physique so that he could not spiritually help his neighbour. Undue austerity was a betrayal of the Jesuit spirit⁴².

1.4 *Fasting*

The philosophy of moderation and sobriety inevitably plays its part in the Jesuit approach to fasting – another research opening of particular interest, for the way it was applied differed not just from one distant part of the globe to

³⁹ Ignazio di Loyola 1977, pp. 811-812.

⁴⁰ Lukács 1965, quote on p. 68 for the *Collegium Romanum*, pp. 118-119 for the *Collegium Germanicum*.

⁴¹ Ignatius de Loyola 1936: *Examen Generalis*, chap. IV, N. 12.

⁴² Ignatius de Loyola 1936: Pars VI, chap. II, NN. 579-580.

another, but even within houses and colleges belonging to the same province. It would appear there was no single common definition of ecclesiastical fasting – a claim that might prompt major issues of period and shift of meaning on the part of terms like renunciation and privation within Christian culture in particular, and religious practice in general⁴³. It may help to remember just what was meant by fasting and what by abstinence in the theological canon in force when the Society of Jesus was founded. The former meant abstaining from all kinds of nourishment for a set time for religious reasons. Normally the deprivation still allowed one meal a day, with a limited range of foods. Meat was generally banned, while the rules varied from place to place over dairy and other animal produce. Abstinence, on the other hand, presupposed eliminating specific items from the diet, especially those deemed most nutritious such as meat and wine. Thomas Aquinas defined abstinence as moderation in eating and sobriety in drinking⁴⁴. The Society of Jesus came into being at a point in history when the discipline of fasting was deeply felt by the Church of Rome. This partly emerges from the proceedings of the Council of Trent which dealt with it as a means towards perfection, atonement of sin, devotion and preparation from the sacraments. The inquisitors' manuals suggested that one of the surest ways of detecting Protestants ("heretics" in the language of such documents) was to check who was eating meat on lean days⁴⁵. It was an age that concerned itself with disciplining the dietary rules of the New World. The Bull *Altitudo Divini Consilii*, dated 1st June 1537 and promulgated by Paul III (1468-1539, pope 1534-1549), concerned natives newly converting to Christianity. It prescribed a less rigid diet than for Europeans: except on the great occasions of Christmas Eve and Good Friday, they were free to eat normally. The concession was confirmed by Gregory XIII (1502-1585, pope 1572-1585) in the Bull of the Holy Crusade (1573)⁴⁶, and was intended as a way of freeing the newly-converted from excessive obligations lest their allegiance to the new faith be jeopardized. The Jesuits stationed in the New World took an active part in this debate. The dispensations to the prohibition of eating meat had a long history, dating back to the evangelization of central-northern Europe and had helped to define the different food cultures of the Old Continent⁴⁷.

The right to dispense from fasting was granted to the Jesuits in 1551. They had applied for it under Julius III (1487-1555, pope 1550-1555), along with the right to absolve in cases of heresy *in foro conscientiae*. In practice the rule of the Society enabled the heads of local or provincial houses, under their hierarchical responsibility, to waive the duty of fasting and abstinence in the case of Fathers

⁴³ De Franceschi 2018, pp. 7-66.

⁴⁴ Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae*, 2-2, q. 143 articulus unicus; analysis of the two definitions in Ferlan 2018b.

⁴⁵ Villani 2018, pp. 381-382; 388-390.

⁴⁶ Metzler 1991, I, N. 83; II, N. 288.

⁴⁷ Flandrin 1983; Montanari 2015.

who were too ill or weak to observe the obligations⁴⁸. The new rubric was announced forthwith to all communities of Jesuit Fathers across Europe. Ignatius added a special recommendation for Simão Rodrigues (1510-1579), in charge of the nascent Portuguese province, exempting him from all obligations related to eating in view of the health problems that tormented him⁴⁹. The idea, in short, was to strike a balance between the canon-law exhortation to moderation and Jesuit rules which sought to preserve good health by not overdoing the renunciation – a tricky balance to achieve, at times.

The attempt to instill moderation at table within the Society of Jesus was not always successful, as confirmed by the sequence of accusations of gluttony, punctuated by repetition of the rules. Claudio Acquaviva (16th March 1614) had to urge the Collegium Hispanicum of Rome to remove cakes, desserts and other delicacies from the menu⁵⁰. At the beginning and end of his long term of office Muzio Vitelleschi (1563-1645, General 1615-1645) was at times forced to take up the issue with the heads of the four Hispanic provinces. The first time (13th December 1618) he repeated the precepts of his predecessor Acquaviva: license to eat meat on lean days might only be granted on serious medical grounds. The second time (1643) he was forced to repeat detailed principles of dietary conduct to instill into the Jesuits the idea that sobriety and religious edification were also on show at table⁵¹.

One highly significant document outlining the problems we have just mentioned dated from the last season of the Early Society. This was a letter sent in 1763 by General Lorenzo Ricci (1703-1775, General 1758-1773) to the Venetian Provincial Superior Romualdo Rota⁵². Ricci had got wind of misdemeanours occurring in that province. Immoderation at table formed one of the most delicate issues, causing the General to lay down not just guidelines, but outright orders. Before summarizing the document in question, I should say that Ricci was careful to praise those Fathers who had sent him their protests and accusations. Complaints by Jesuits reporting excessive eating, drinking and smoking form most revealing sources: they show us not just the importance of food culture, but the complexity and dynamics of conflict within the order. One most interesting example of this is the detailed list of charges brought before General González de Santalla (1624-1705, General 1687-1705) by the French Jesuit Honoratus Chaurand (+ 1697) on his deathbed. He accused the younger

⁴⁸ Ignatius de Loyola 1905, pp. 457-458: Pater Joannes de Polanco ex commissione Patri Jacobo Laino, Romae, 9.5.1551.

⁴⁹ Cf. Ignatius de Loyola 1905, pp. 488, 489, 505-506; for the instruction to Simão Rodrigues: 536, 616.

⁵⁰ ARSI, Epp. Nostrorum 120-I, cc. 199-200.

⁵¹ Respectively ARSI, Epp. Nostrorum 120-I, c. 171; Epp. Nostrorum 120-II, cc. 303-305.

⁵² ARSI, Epp. Nostrorum, 120-II, cc. 239-242.

generation of such heavy consumption, above all of coffee and tobacco, as to jeopardise their vows of obedience and poverty⁵³.

The first section of Ricci's letter regarded the requirement to limit excesses of the table on church feasts (Epiphany, Maundy Thursday, Carnivaltide) and when on holiday. In urging the need for moderation, the General spoke of a return to the old practice: evidently over the decades habits had got even laxer than at the time of Vitelleschi's strictures which we have already mentioned. The second batch of restrictions regarded those occasions on which the food was not the same for everyone: cases involving either confrères shouldering special burdens (preachers, thesis supervisors) or visiting outsiders. Ricci's exhortations to sobriety and detailed guidelines on foodstuffs focused on the central role of fish in the Venetian Fathers' diet. The third set of precepts concerned ordinary mealtimes which had grown too lavish over the years. The habit of adding gifts (*regali*) (i.e. of culinary delicacies) to the main course (*porzione*) had also set in. From this series of orders Ricci went on to make useful suggestions as to how to contain the food budget. Documents of the kind are not infrequent in the Roman Archive of the Society: comparable guidelines had been laid down, for example, in 1733 by General Franz Retz (1673-1750, General 1730-1750) for the Austrian province, where the problem was the undue number of courses served and the unseemly consumption of wine⁵⁴. As we shall see later, the economics of the Jesuit table is an area well worth studying.

This source brings to light several points that the second part of the essay will explore more deeply in connection with the sociability of Jesuit food culture. Before doing so, however, let us try and list a few particularly important research questions to do with moderation. As I explained above, my intention is not just to suggest analysis of primary sources, but to point to possible new avenues of research on the topic of Jesuit food culture.

First, it seems safe to say there is room for investigation into the degree of observance for the rules of eating: what foods and what kinds of behaviour constituted infringement? Was the Jesuit refectory, all in all, a place of privilege where sobriety disappeared in the face of tempting rich fare? Were there any peculiarities linked to local foods or drinks? Did the mission territories pose problems due to the abundance of enticing foods like chocolate, or on the contrary to short supply? As for fasting and abstinence, one might wonder how far periodic abstaining from meat bore on the issue of the creation of certain diets. One also wonders how far the canonical rule of fasting was applied, what dispensations there were, how and by whom they were administered. On that score, the health beliefs in the modern era and the role of doctors were clearly important and both worth looking into, given the Jesuits' well-known commitment to all branches of learning, including medical science.

⁵³ ARSI, Congregationes 39, cc. 70r-92v.

⁵⁴ ARSI, Epp. Nostrorum 120-II, cc. 375-377.

2. *Food as a social fact*

The second main area of my essay regards the social side to meals. Eating within a modern-era religious order was a communal occasion calling for precise rules which must sometimes have been broken. A word here of theoretical clarification. Anthropology teaches us that feeding in general and mealtimes in particular are a “total social and cultural fact”, hence bearing on all levels of society and, in our case, the Society (of Jesus). To Marcel Mauss a total social fact is an activity that has implications throughout society, in the economic, legal, political, and religious spheres⁵⁵. If we look at Jesuit food culture, we realize that the definition of “total social fact” is well founded, in agreement with anthropological research which includes alimentation in this conceptual definition⁵⁶. In Jesuit culture meals had a clear religious significance; they were a moment of sharing among confrères, regulated by precise rules. The regulatory framework was bound up with the rules of canon law and those of individual provinces. We cannot, of course, overlook the expense of daily feeding, let alone the much heavier inroads made by feast days and celebrations when important social and political relations might be involved, calling for entertainment of the secular authorities. Lastly, we should note that budgeting was a duty left to lay brethren, who were required to comply with detailed instructions laid down by superiors.

Reference to anthropological theory enables us to clarify that an interdisciplinary approach (along with a diachronic approach) is one of the key methods, ideally suited to Jesuit studies on food culture *inter alia*, in full agreement with the recommendations recently made by John W. O’Malley⁵⁷. Behind the consuming of lunch or dinner lie procedures such as choosing, purchasing, preserving and preparing foodstuffs. As we have seen, that presupposes acceptance of a moral and cultural framework involving religious beliefs and medical knowledge. Again, meals entail relating: food and drink are factors that unite and divide, an opportunity for exchange, sharing and exclusion. Such an approach clearly affords immense research prospects, and for this reason the article has proposed some potential research questions that go beyond what has been examined here.

Let us begin with relations among people involved in the background to providing a meal: shopping, cooking, serving and especially the relationship between the chef (a layman) and his helpers (Jesuits), as laid down in the Constitutions. The relationship seems clearly to have been modelled on obedience: the helpers were asked to obey the chef in all humility, viewing him

⁵⁵ Mauss 1923-1924, pp. 179-180.

⁵⁶ For a comparison between history and anthropology, see Hubert 2007; see also Muchnik 2006; O’Connor 2015, pp. 6-10.

⁵⁷ O’Malley 2018.

as their direct superior. Hence the chef was to order, not ask – albeit tactfully and simply. The reason for the rule was plainly stated in the text of the rubric: a layman requesting a priest to clean the saucepans or perform some other menial task would have upset the normal social pattern. But if the request were made as an order, the chef would be speaking like «Christ to a man, since he commands him in His name». Those expected to obey, in short, should imagine that it was not a chef or some superior giving orders, but Christ Himself⁵⁸. It must be said that it would not always be laymen in charge of the kitchen: there was a fairly widespread custom in early modern-era religious families of using staff occupying an intermediate status between religious and simple hired worker. Inside the Jesuit order that figure had become institutionalised as the temporal coadjutor who was nonetheless expected to take vows. Such was not the case with the Carthusians, who expected their kitchen staff to abide by the rules of the institute but without committing themselves by any solemn form of promise⁵⁹.

Part of any hierarchical approach to food culture entails not only relations among kitchen workers, but the menu offered, especially the choosing of foodstuffs which, inside the Jesuit order, was not the same for all. Such an approach offers scope for research into personal relationships inside religious orders and also those of members of the order towards outsiders. One ideal source for this issue is a detailed document dating from 1549 which sums up the rules Jesuits should abide by at table – rules discussed first by «five priests from the house» (*cinque sacerdoti di casa*) and then approved by Ignatius⁶⁰. On the question of differential treatment at the table, the rubric was quite clear: all should be served in the same way as to quality and quantity, with two exceptions, bodily need or illness, which released the person concerned from rules. That succinct proviso gave rise to accusations and fierce debate, amply recorded in great detail in historical Jesuit documentation. On this issue we may take the example of a letter (20th March 1642) sent from Messina to the Sicilian Provincial and to General Vitelleschi (presumably a copy). It was a delicate issue. According to the charge (and charge it was), the Provincial himself was enjoying unacceptable privileges at table. He invariably travelled with a companion, and when he visited a college, one Jesuit Father would be compelled to surrender his place to that companion who, one infers, sat down to table without being expected. The menu for the two guests was also particularly lavish: they were served elaborate dishes like lasagna with sugar, soups and fish courses of considerable off with copious *pospasti* (something like our desserts). Perhaps the most serious charge was that, whereas everyone fasted on

⁵⁸ Ignatius de Loyola 1936, *Examen Generalis*, cap. IV, N. 29: «pareçe que habla como Christo a hombre, pues en su lugar le manda»; D'Ambrosio 2014, pp. 216-219.

⁵⁹ Henryot 2015, pp. 153-161.

⁶⁰ *Conclusiones aliquorum patrum circa puncta a S. Ignatio proposita*, in Ignatius de Loyola 1948, pp. 194-196, quote on p. 194.

Saturdays (probably they abstained, but the author of the accusation did not go into niceties), the Provincial would eat octopus, the daintiest fare imaginable⁶¹. In this case food is the terrain of confrontation with the Society's rules; it also affords a glimpse of social discord, a bone of contention materializing into evidence of contradictions between the rules or moral precepts, and how they were actually being observed⁶².

The case we have described may be unusual, but the Jesuits' food regulations did allow substantial exceptions to the principle of equality. Sources from the Milanese province explain in detail, beginning from a teaching memorandum that covers uniformity and differences of treatment at the Jesuit table⁶³. The main reason for departing from the rule – in its broad outline – was health. Indisposition and weakness of constitution entitled to a considerable relaxation of the norms of fasting and abstinence. But here as elsewhere, the rules were designed to prevent too many exceptions, and to foil people who did not really need a special diet, but simply feared to become ill. Evidently the figure of the hypochondriac, or worse still the man shamming sick, was not unknown to the Jesuit refectory. The second kind of exception was in full agreement with medical knowledge at the time, which saw intellectual work as genuinely tiring and deserving of special attentions. This was why preachers, readers, speakers and public theological debaters all merited richer fare (*carezze della tavola*). Thirdly, special rules applied to holiday time when people travelled the countryside away from their residence, and likewise to the many feast days. The changing menu system was a thorny matter, in short, calling for a happy balance between ordinary times, holidays and days of fasting or abstinence. That the issue needed regulating so often strongly suggests there was a tricky balance to achieve. The calls of hospitality and keeping up appearances, lastly, meant that visitors to a Jesuit house, not just dignitaries of civil and religious society, but fellow priests on the road, would be given special treatment.

A Milanese document kept in the same folder as this teaching memorandum covers exceptions, giving details concerning occasions or dishes and the arranging of exceptional meals⁶⁴. The sources gathered in the Milan file are noteworthy indeed, summarizing over a century of dining customs. It dates from 1683 and is signed by a Milanese father provincial, Giovanni Maria Visconti (1648-1729). It dwells at length on individual foodstuffs. The example of fish may suffice: at Genoa, Nice and in Corsica (lands then falling under the Milanese province), it took the place of meat on certain "fat days" since it was of better quality and cheaper. Hence the amount of fish served to the

⁶¹ ARSI, Sicala 13-I, c. 189v; my thanks to Adina Ruiu for drawing my notice to the document.

⁶² D'Ambrosio 2006.

⁶³ ARSI, Mediolanum 73, cc. 2r-6v (no date).

⁶⁴ ARSI, Mediolanum 73, cc. 31-50v, *Prammatica del vitto ordinario e straordinario, raccolta e aggiustata prendendo in esame le disposizioni di vari provinciali, Giovanni Maria Visconti, 1683.*

Jesuits of those areas was greater than normal⁶⁵. Such prolonged bending of the rules clearly shows how the principle that the table was a place and moment of equality was not strictly applied. The reverse was true: getting round the basic rule was a constant cause of complaint and protest.

In turn, the guidelines as to how to sit at the dining table and behave during communal meals contain interesting tips on early modern food culture, and local or Jesuit points of difference, providing a profitable field for comparison. Ignatius liked sobriety and silence. When elected general of the Society of Jesus, he usually ate in a room adjoining his bedroom and was not averse to having Jesuits share his table when he had business to discuss with them, some of them new to the city, others about to quit it. He was happy to host guests from outside the Society, but warned them that dining with him would be a form of penance⁶⁶.

From the Autobiography we learn of his routine, thanks to the description of a meeting he had at Venice when waiting to sail for Jerusalem. Staying with a rich Spaniard for those few days, Loyola stuck to his usual line of keeping quiet when eating in company and only answering briefly when prompted. But he did listen with close attention, and at the end of the meal would pick up and develop any points he had found interesting, turning them to discussion of God⁶⁷. The rule of silence outlined in the Exercises would be confirmed by the early Jesuits who voted as a majority that it was best to dine without talking⁶⁸. That was no novelty, of course, but an age-old monastic tradition; the silence would be filled with edifying readings, serving to nourish the soul along with the body⁶⁹. From the outset the Ignatian order resolved to adopt this practice⁷⁰, and soon reading in the refectory proved a key moment in forming the Jesuit identity: they would listen not just to sacred and spiritual texts, but edifying stories from their peers' biographies, especially those in missionary parts⁷¹. One such is a manuscript entitled *Dialogues which tell of the unhappy ending of those who have left the Society of Jesus*, by Pedro de Ribadeneira (1527-1611)⁷². The volume relates an imaginary dialogue among three Jesuits. They are speaking about their brothers, who had left the Society. Many of them

⁶⁵ ARSI, Mediolanum 73, cc. 1r-2r.

⁶⁶ González de Cámara, *Memoriale*, in Ignatius de Loyola 1943, N. 185.

⁶⁷ Ignatius de Loyola 1904, N. 43.

⁶⁸ *Conclusiones aliquorum patrum*, in Ignatius de Loyola 1948, p. 194.

⁶⁹ Henryot 2015, pp. 231-240; D'Ambrosio 2006, pp. 280-281.

⁷⁰ *Constitutiones Collegiorum*, in Ignatius de Loyola 1948, p. 227; *Summarii Constitutionum anno 1560 editi*, ivi, p. 551.

⁷¹ O'Malley 1993, pp. 360-361. In the file prepared by Fr Lamalle as a guide to the documents kept in ARSI there is an interesting note: *Lectio ad Mensam*.

⁷² The Spanish text of Ribadeneira's manuscript is in ARSI, Fondo Gesuitico, 67: Diálogos en los cuales se tratan algunos exemplos de personas que avendo salido de la Religión de la Compañía de Jesús, han sido castigados severamente de la mano del Señor. Escritos por el P.e P.o de Ribadeneira de la misma Compañía. There are also two Italian translations in ARSI, Vitae 93 and ARSI, Fondo Gesuitico, 46. References are to ARSI Vitae 93, cc. 89r-91v.

had met with a tragic death. One of the stories narrated in this book is the biography of an eminent Austrian Jesuit, Peter Bastius (born in c.1558, expelled from the order in 1604). In his career as a teacher and dean he went to Prague and in that town he converted to Lutheranism: «He left the Society of Jesus and joined the Society of Satan»⁷³. Peter consorted with a woman and began to preach the protestant faith and condemn the Jesuits in his orations. The story had an unhappy or happy ending, depending on one's viewpoint since he suddenly fell ill and died in the space of two days. The manuscript says that this happened to people who did not observe their vows of obedience and chastity. Sometimes, indeed, it seemed that the Lord delayed the punishment in time. This was because the Lord wanted to strike with fury. The Catholics celebrated Bastius's death as a miracle and the Lutherans wept. I choose this example to highlight the importance of the meal as a social moment. It is a moment at which Jesuits could build their own identity, dwelling upon the consequences of sin and, as it were, serving at the dining table a mixture of inclusion (the dining community) and exclusion (examples of devilry). There are many other good examples awaiting scholars to study them.

The definition by Marcel Mauss paraphrased above suggests the importance of the “total social fact” as an economic approach. Reasoning by such principles enables us to go beyond the limits and timing of meals as canonically prescribed, and delve into the details of beverage consumption. I allude to the extraordinary story of maté (*yerba mate*), the infusion from the leaves of the *Ilex Paraquariensis* which played such a vital role in supporting the Reductions of Paraguay⁷⁴. On first meeting it, the missionaries viewed it as a diabolical drink, but maté was quickly converted into a divine gift when they grasped its cultural significance, nutritional power and economic potential. On first planning the Reductions' set-up, the Jesuits wished to begin from a complete understanding of the environment they would be entering, and hence did not underestimate the potential for self-financing. Most of the early mission reports from the river basins of the Paraná, Uruguay and Paraguay thus list a kind of inventory of human and natural resources, as well as a rudimentary social analysis: flora, fauna, demographic, economic and political details. They would throw in advice on ways of improving the lifestyle and exploiting natural resources in line with the European cultural model. In performing their missionary work, they needed to devise the best economic strategy they could, and it was soon apparent that, moral doubts apart as to its widespread consumption, *yerba* might make an incomparable contribution. Notes on the local resources, including the plentiful supply of maté, were a constant feature of annual letters, for example a report dating from the late 1630s⁷⁵. For some

⁷³ «Lasciò la Compagnia di Gesù ed entrosseni in quella di Satana», in ARSI, Vitae 93, c. 90v.

⁷⁴ Garavaglia 2008; Sarreal 2014.

⁷⁵ Maeder 1984, pp. 167-168.

years maté had figured in trading activities, both inside the existing reductions and vis-à-vis outside customers. The fluctuating feeling about *yerba* in the early days of the reductions persisted inside the order. General congregations drew up contradictory resolutions: in 1637 they approved maté production at the reductions for internal consumption and exportation⁷⁶; but in 1677 the Jesuits voted to ban *yerba*, together with tobacco and chocolate production, with the blessing of General Giovanni Paolo Oliva (1600-1681, General 1664-1681)⁷⁷.

The case study on maté is one of the most fully explored among Jesuit studies. It serves to show how the economic weight of certain crops impacted food culture. That is certainly true of missionary countries, and not unknown in Europe. For example, it was a rule of the Venetian province that an expedition be made to Lecce to stock up with olive oil. Only if the buyer found a suitable price might he purchase a two-year stock; otherwise another journey would be made the following year⁷⁸. The example shows the scope for investigating the history of taste, and asking questions like: to what lengths would people go to find good quality foodstuffs? How much could they afford? The history of taste does indeed contribute to reconstructing food culture.

Talking of the economic value of food recalls the need to *save*: in the olive oil example this seems not to have outweighed quality. But there were so many ways of avoiding wastefulness. One is mentioned in the instructions written by General Giovanni Paolo Oliva (1600-1681, General 1664-1681) to the Father Superior of the Rome houses on 2nd July 1681. Not for the first time, Oliva recommended drawing up a rotating daily menu system on a two-monthly basis, taking account of the season. Though ignored by the addressees, the arrangement was primarily intended for economy's sake (*con vantaggio dell'economia*), but it would also enable those responsible for the pantry and kitchen to organize their work properly. Lastly, the planning of meals would be useful to the domestic staff as recognition for their labours⁷⁹. Anti-waste measures and recipes are another promising line of research which would bring Jesuit studies into close contact with the latest studies on virtuous distribution of food and re-employment of left-overs⁸⁰.

The examples of maté and olive oil illustrate how studying the economic management of agricultural produce and food in general may be a way to reconstruct Jesuit food culture. Equally important in that reconstruction is research into the living expenses budget – something that emerged from my remarks on Ricci's advice on saving. Again, documents such as the one entitled «Dispute over Food and Travelling Expenses settled case by case» (*Controversie*

⁷⁶ Rouillon Arróspide 1997, p. 224.

⁷⁷ ARSI, Congregationes 80, cc. 118 and 122; Garavaglia 2008, pp. 53-54.

⁷⁸ ARSI, Veneta 93, c. 19v.

⁷⁹ ARSI, Epp. Nostrorum 120-II, cc. 125-126.

⁸⁰ An example of multidisciplinary interest in the subject is to be found in Davies, Legg 2018.

d'Alimenti e Viatici risolte di tempo in tempo)⁸¹ tell us of the close link between economics and law: it contains regulations as to allocating the food budget, and especially about deciding the travelling allowance for Jesuits on the road from one province to another – evidently a bone of contention. Food is an important issue of canon law too, as follows from what we said about the rules of fasting and abstinence. If we recall the gist of the chocolate issue, for instance, we may point out how its identity – food, drink, hybrid? – became part of a theological and canonical debate between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The debate figures prominently in Jesuit documents. Thus, there is also a legal side, making diet in general and Jesuit diet in particular a total social fact.

I started this article with the theoretical clarification of the concept of food culture, in order to determine the existence and the definition of a Jesuit food culture. The latter is imbued with the concept of moderation, which is defined on the one hand through the various medical cultures specific to any particular time and place, on the other hand through moral rules, established in the Jesuit normative corpus. Taking into account the ways in which medical and moral knowledge interact helps to determine how moderation is interpreted in the Jesuit food culture: eating and drinking with balance, not depriving oneself of the necessary, following the rules on fasting without risk to the health.

The clarification of the concept of social fact helps to highlight a peculiar set of ingredients of Jesuit food culture: cost, preparation, timing and sharing of meals.

Once established the method necessary to deal with the topic «Food and Jesuits», I tried to use sources and studies related to the early modern Christian West firstly to analyse certain essential aspects of the negotiation between individuals (of different hierarchical level) and cultural models (in different parts of the world) through the lens of food habits. Secondly, I integrated the historiographic method, based on the analysis of sources, with the help of other sciences (first of all anthropology), so as to grasp a deeper and more complex vision of the Jesuit food culture. The use of interdisciplinary and diachronic approaches might have a high potential in revealing new dynamics of social and religious life in the early modern era.

⁸¹ ARSI, Fondo Gesuitico 494, cc. 379-772.

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