

# SAFEGUARDING TRADITIONAL PALESTINIAN FOOD CULTURE: THE CASE OF THE ARAB AMERICAN PLAY *FOOD AND FADWA*\*

## Arap Amerikan Oyunu *Food and Fadwa*'da Geleneksel Filistin Yemek Kültürünün Korunması

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### ABSTRACT

Scholarly literature on the relationship between food and nationalism has achieved further momentum with the ascendancy of food and foodways as cultural heritage onto the international arena by way of such global institutions as The European Union and UNESCO. However, extant literature that explores how national claims to certain food items and practices are inextricably linked with wider, complex economic, cultural, and political issues is marked by sketchy references to food wars between Israel and Palestine which are devoid of a comprehensive analysis of their true nature in the context of Israel/Palestine. This article aims to critically examine in the Arab American play *Food and Fadwa* (2012) the web of relations between food and nationalism in Israel/Palestine, with particular focus on safeguarding traditional Palestinian food culture in a settler-colonial context. Firstly, I elaborate upon the specific context under which Palestinian and Israeli claims to certain food items inextricably linked to claims making to land and history. Then, I attempt to demonstrate the conceptual gap between food as cultural heritage in the context of Palestine/Israel and food as heritage in the context of 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Finally, I offer culinary sumud in *Food and Fadwa* as a daily, dynamic, constantly shifting, bottom-top, and multi-level strategy and praxis for safeguarding and sustaining Palestinian food culture against Israel's culinary colonialism, and as a "non-listed" expression of food heritagization. Such an approach opens up new avenues for alternative understandings and expressions of food other than those institutionalized conceptions to be found in the lists, inventories, and nominations of the 2003 Convention. Therefore, *Food and Fadwa* has much to say about safeguarding food culture in the context of Palestine/Israel.

### Keywords

Food, nationalism, culinary sumud, culinary colonialism, Palestinian/Israeli conflict, UNESCO 2003 Convention, Arab American drama.

### ÖZ

Yemek ve yemek pratiklerinin kültürel miras olarak, UNESCO ve Avrupa Birliği gibi küresel kurumlar aracılığı ile uluslararası arenada boy göstermesi, yemek ve milliyetçilik arasındaki ilişkileri inceleyen bilimsel yazına daha da ivme kazandırmıştır. Ancak, belli yemek ve pratiklerinin millî yemekler olarak sahiplenilme çabalarının, daha kapsamlı, karmaşık ekonomik, kültürel ve siyasi konularla yakından ilişkili olduğunu araştıran bu yaygın yazın, İsrail ve Filistin arasındaki yemek savaşlarına, bu savaşların gerçek tabiatını kavramaktan uzak, üstünkörü referanslar yapmakla yetinmişlerdir. Bu çalışma, Arap Amerikan oyunu *Food and Fadwa*'da (2012) yemek ve milliyetçilik arasındaki ilişkiler örüntüsünü, geleneksel Filistin yemek kültürünün yerleşik-sömürgeci bir bağlamda korunması konusuna özel vurgu yaparak eleştirel bir inceleme yapmayı amaçlar. İlk olarak Filistin ve İsrail'in belli yemekleri sahiplenme çabalarının altını çizen spesifik bağlamı detaylandırarak bu yemek savaşlarının Filistin topraklarını ve tarihini sahiplenme çabalarından ayrı olarak düşünülemediğini belirtiyorum. Sonrasında, Filistin/İsrail bağlamındaki yemek mirası algısı ile UNESCO'nun 2003 Somut Olmayan Kültürel Mirasın Korunması Sözleşmesi'ndeki kültürel miras olarak yemek algısı arasındaki kavramsal boşluğa dikkat çekiyorum. Son olarak, İsrail'in yemek cephesinde yürüttüğü sömürgeleştirme çabaları karşısında, geleneksel Filistin yemek kültürünün korunması ve devam ettirilmesi için, *Food and Fadwa* (2012) oyununda temsilini gösterdiğim culinary sumud kavramını, günlük, çok katmanlı, değişken, dinamik, tabana yayılmış, bir strateji ve uygulama, ve aynı zamanda yemek mirasını korumanın "listelenmemiş" bir ifadesi olarak tanımlıyorum. Böyle bir yaklaşım, geleneksel yemek ve pratiklerinin, 2003 Sözleşmesi'nin listelerinde, envanterlerinde ve adaylık dosyalarında bulunmayan alternatif ifadelerinin ve anlamlarının önünü açması açısından önem taşır. Bu nedenle, *Food and Fadwa* oyununun, Filistin/İsrail bağlamında, yemek kültürünün korunmasını ilişkin söyleyeceği çok şey vardır.

\* Received: 6 April 2021 - Accepted: 14 June 2022

Yavaş, Nesrin. "Safeguarding Traditional Palestinian Food Culture: The Case of the Arab American Play *Food and Fadwa*." *Millî Folklor* 135 (Autumn 2022): 148-159

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**Anahtar Kelimeler**

Yemek, milliyetçilik, culinary sumud, yemek kültürü koloniciliği, İsrail/Filistin sorunu, UNESCO 2003 Sözleşmesi, Arap Amerikan tiyatrosu.

**Introduction**

The relation between food and nationalism has become the object of critical scholarly attention particularly with the ascendancy of food as cultural heritage onto the international arena by way of such global institutions as The European Union and UNESCO. For Marion Demossier (2016), the global rush to get on the bandwagon of food heritagization through instrumentalization of UNESCO heritage conventions needs further scrutinizing for it is loaded with commercial and political interests that mobilize food as “an ideal and idealistic blueprint for the construction of heritage commodities and identity processes” (2016: 90). Michaela De Soucey’s theory of gastronationalism draws attention to “the use of food production, consumption, and distribution to demarcate and sustain the emotive power of national attachment, as well as the use of national sentiments to produce and market food” (2010: 433). De Soucey contends that EU’s national origin labeling for local agricultural foodstuffs “connect[s] nationalist projects with food culture at local levels” (2010:433). UNESCO’s *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (UNESCO 2003) (hereafter ICH Convention) defined food as intangible cultural heritage which must be safeguarded against the homogenizing effects of globalism. UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity contains cuisines and dishes from across the world including, among others, Gastronomic Meal of the French (GMF), Traditional Mexican Cuisine, Croatian gingerbread, Japanese Washoku, and Korean kimchi (Representative List 2010).

Di Giovine and Brulotte (2014) admit the economic, commercial benefits that come with food heritagization. However, they also draw attention to how food, when designated as heritage, initiates complex political tensions that “indicate, explicate, and replicate ideological claims on identity, ownership, sovereignty, and value” (2014:3). Food, with its emotive connotations, also bind people across time and space, “as individuals collectively remember past experiences with certain meals and imagine their ancestors having similar experiences. When this occurs, food is transformed into heritage” (Di Giovine and Brulotte 2014:1).

In addition to being a strong cultural and ethnic identity marker, food also houses overt political connotations. As Lucas Lixinski notes “the creation or preservation of national identity (in the sense of political national identity) is one of the rationales behind the protection of heritage” (2013: 4). How food is mobilized in the construction, solidification, representation, and maintenance of national identities has lately become the focus of scholarly writings: Pakhurst Ferguson (2010: 102) reflects upon culinary nationalism to argue that cookbooks and recipes can tell us “what is French or Italian nation states”; Arjun Appadurai’s (1988) study on the Indian cookbooks through the 1970s and 1980s highlights how they contributed to the construction of a unified national identity by way of combining diverse ethnic and regional foods under the banner of Indian cuisine; Bahar Aykan (2016) elaborates upon the food wars in Western Asia over the ownership of *keşkek*, *dolma* and *lavash*; Ichijo and Ranta (2016) investigate a variety of cases related to food and nationalism across the world.

What is common to all the above-mentioned cases that seek national, cultural, and/or commercial interests either through cookbooks or international institutions is that their actors are nation-states whose nationhood is not questioned, and who are not under

military occupation, and that they are nation-states that abide by the rulings of international heritage law. Therefore, Israel's withdrawal from UNESCO in 2018, Palestine's fundamental non-sovereignty as a quasi-state condition marked by legal and institutional voids in a settler-colonial context require not only a non-Western approach to an analysis of the ways food and nationalism intersect in the context of Palestine/Israel, but also a far more different approach to food than that of *food as heritage* designated by the ICH Convention. This is because, firstly, in the course of Palestinian history heritage has always been allied with the resistance against colonization and uprooting while, for the Israeli state, it has been indispensable from its colonial-nationalist, Zionist project, mobilized as a discourse to dispossess Palestinians of their past and their land, and, secondly, food in the context of Israel/Palestine conflict is a specific assemblage of meanings, modes of schemes and actions, and material sites, hence its incommensurability with ICH Convention's conception of food as intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, I prefer to use the term *food intangible cultural heritage* to refer to the ICH Convention. As the title of this article indicates, I employ the term *food culture* to underlie both the intricate web of political, ideological, and environmental practices and meanings related to food and how they are enmeshed with issues of land ownership and sovereignty in the context of Palestine.

*Food and Fadwa* (2012) is an Arab American, Palestine-inspired theatrical production by Lameece Issaq, an actor and writer, and Jacob Kader, a writer, director, and producer of film, and theater, which had its World Premiere at New York Theatre Workshop in 2012, co-produced with Noor theatre. In response to the question I raised in the title of this study, I argue that the play *Food and Fadwa* has much to tell us about safeguarding food culture in the context of Palestine/Israel conflict: preservation and sustainability of Palestinian food culture is inextricably related to the Palestinian claims to land and sovereignty; food heritagization in the context of Palestine/Israel conflict entails multi-level, bottom-up, anti-colonial, resistant practices conducted on a daily basis; the ICH Convention's limited scope of food as cultural heritage falls short of covering other meanings that accumulate around food in the context of Palestine/Israel because safeguarding Palestinian traditional food culture in a settler-colonial context cannot be separated from other issues surrounding food: food and livelihood security, agriculture, and biodiversity that are intimately bounded up with the Zionist settler-colonial ideology which has ever since the Nakba (forced exodus of Palestinians out of their villages in 1948) targeted to sever Palestinian ties to the land to create a people without a land and a history; the international standards of cultural heritage and the reality of engaging with cultural heritage in a settler-colonial context.

In the context of Israeli- Palestinian conflict, claims to land, history and nationhood constitute the backbone of the confrontation between the settler-colonial state of Israel and the Palestinians displaced and dispossessed under occupation, in contravention of international law. In its attempt to unify a geographically dispersed and multi-ethnic people in a land not of its own, the Israeli state has employed a wide range of strategies to construct its own national narrative. This has been a Zionist colonial- national project conducted by the Israeli state at multiple levels: educational, political, economic, cultural, religious, and territorial. Food is one of the fronts where this ongoing confrontation is conducted. Food as heritage and national identity marker has become a politically charged concept, a novel front of confrontation for two competing nationalist discourses. Israeli state's official top-down regulation of the relation between food and nationalism is inextricably linked to the control, containment, co-option of the Palestinian people living on

the occupied lands. Therefore, at the core of Israel's systematic cultural appropriation of traditional Arab/Palestinian foods and Palestinians' daily, deliberate manifestations of nationalism through their traditional foods lie competing claims to ownership of land, to history and sovereignty.

Palestinian resistance to Israel's systematic appropriation of Arab/Palestinian traditional dishes and to the Israeli colonial interferences manifested in the production, cultivation, circulation, and foraging of certain food items can be understood within the conceptual framework of the Palestinian national narrative *sumud*, and how *culinary sumud*, as I name it, intersects with Palestinian heritage making and heritage preservation on a daily basis. To explicate how *sumud* is an intrinsic and indispensable aspect of Palestinian heritage preservation and heritage making that directly informs Palestinian claims-making to land and sovereignty, it is important to elaborate upon the pivotal role that *sumud* plays in the Palestinian preservation of its long-cherished cultural heritage in a settler-colonial context.

### **Safeguarding Food Heritage in the Israeli/Palestinian Context: Culinary Sumud versus Culinary Colonialism**

The concept of *sumud* stands out as the pillar of Palestinian national identity construction and (re)production on a daily basis (Rijke and van Teeffelen 2015; Bascunan-Wiley 2019; Hammad and Tribe 2020). *Sumud* translates from Arabic as “steadfastness” or “resilience”. As a national symbol, *sumud* has journeyed along varied paths of signification in the Palestinian political and cultural discourse: from armed resistance to Israel's occupation of the historic land of Palestine, to non-violent acts of resistance such as resisting to leave, and staying in the occupied territories, keeping the families, the community and the culture intact, marshalling self-sustaining daily strategies, replanting the olive trees uprooted by the Israeli army, rebuilding houses each time after they are demolished, gathering herbs banned by the Israeli state. Caitlin Ryan defines *sumud* as follows:

*Sumud* is a tactic of resistance to the Israeli occupation that relies upon adaptation to the difficulties of life under occupation, staying in the territories despite hardship, and asserting Palestinian culture and identity in response to Zionist claims which posit Israelis as the sole legitimate inhabitants of the land. *Sumud* represents a “resilient resistance”—a tactic of resistance that relies on qualities of resilience such as getting by and adapting to shock (Ryan 2015: 299).

Israeli sociologists Yonatan Mendel and Ronald Ranta, who observe how “many of the social, cultural, and gastronomical items and norms that [are] labeled as ‘Israeli’ [are] in fact connected to the Arab world and culture . . . food such as falafel and humus, which originated in Arab and Arab-Palestinian food . . . are all given examples of Israeli food and food culture” (2016: x). Ranta and Mentel unearth the connection between “Zionism, the construction of Jewish national identity and food culture” by giving the example of Israel's “most recognized postcard,” which “depicts a portion of pita bread with falafel with an Israeli flag stuck on the peak of the pita, titled ‘Falafel: Israel's national snack’” (2014:415). In this context, *culinary sumud* is an unofficial bottom-up manifestation of everyday nationhood, manifestations of which are resistance-based and rooted in claims to land and sovereignty. Following from this, I argue that *culinary sumud*, in the context of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, is a daily, multi-level, dynamic, resistant praxis of food heritage making and preservation to sustain an anti-colonial and emancipatory collective political consciousness mobilized to deny legitimacy to Zionist settler colonialism and to subvert its structures of power.

### **Safeguarding Traditional Palestinian Food Culture Through *Culinary Sumud* in *Food and Fadwa***

*Food and Fadwa* takes place against the backdrop of present-day occupied Palestine. The play unfolds in the kitchen of the Faranesh family in Bethlehem, West Bank against the background of an unnotified Israeli curfew with water and electricity shortages. With the occupation looming in the background, Fadwa, who lives with her ailing father, and aunt Samia, is stationed in front of the kitchen counter in her Bethlehem house, cooking and pretending to be hosting a TV cooking show. Indeed, the kitchen acts as a site where Israeli state's Zionist colonial-settler strategies coalesce with its strategies of cultural, political, economic dispossession of the Palestinians in the occupied territories. As the play opens, Fadwa is cooking for the quests coming from the United States, her cousin Hayat and her boyfriend Youssif, for her sister Dalal's wedding. The first dish is Baba Ghanoush, which means, as Fadwa explains, means "Spoiled old daddy," which has its roots in Arabic folklore. As narrated by Fadwa, Baba Ghanoush came into life when an old, toothless father did not like the mashed eggplant, and wanted "zest-life, in his food! And so began the culinary wizardry. A touch of tahini . . . zesty lemon, a clove of garlic" and "the most important ingredient in an Arab kitchen. Zeit Zaytoun. Oil of Olives. Extra virgin" (Issaq and Kader 2016: 143). Baba ghanoush is just one of the delicacies appropriated as an item of the Israeli "national cuisine." Fadwa's account of the origin of baba ghanoush in Arabic folklore is a deliberate act of resistance in that it places the origins of this Arab/Palestinian appetizer in a millennium old Levantine cuisine, claiming it as a delicacy of Arab/Palestinian culture. Fadwa's particular emphasis on olive oil needs further elaboration given Israel's systematic uprooting of Palestinians olive trees, thereby curtailing olive harvesting and processing, all aimed to erase not only the most important national, economic, and cultural symbol of Palestinians, the olive tree, but also Palestinian people off the face of land.

While cooking, Fadwa tells us how her grandmother, Tayta, gave birth to her father under a centuries-old olive tree during harvesting time, and how she fed him under the same tree for forty days and soothed the baby with the lullaby *Ah Ya Zein*. Harvesting, cultivating olive trees, and the production and consumption of olive oil has been not only Palestinians' means of livelihood and subsistence, but also symbols of Palestinian national identity inextricably related to their land. However, like many other olive groves, that of Fawzi family has also been bulldozed by the Israeli forces to open up new lands for Israeli settlers, army bases to lay infrastructure, expand roads. These uprootings are intended not only to force farmers from their lands: it carries with it the trauma of spatial, cultural uprooting of an entire people whose ties and claims to their homeland are severed.

Israeli Iruş Braverman argues that with the occupation of their ancestral lands, olive trees and olive oil have become politically charged entities representing Palestinian *sumud*, resilient resistance in a daily praxis:

Through their direct and indirect acts of uprooting, sabotaging, and denying the Palestinians access to the olive tree, the State of Israel and the settlers have vested the olive with enormous power. At the end of the day, then, the various struggles conducted on the olive's behalf have enhanced the already significant status of the olive tree in various Palestinian narratives. The tragic story constructed around the olive has made this tree, more than ever before, into both the symbol and the embodiment of Palestinian nationhood and, perhaps more importantly, into a manifestation of Palestinian resistance to Israel's occupation (Braverman 2009: 3).

Fadwa's father, Baba, has been suffering from dementia ever since his olive trees were uprooted by the Israeli military forces. Aunt Samia talks about the day when the

Faranesh family's olive grove and everything it represented were annihilated by the Israeli forces:

SAMIA. You can't imagine what it was like. Tanks and Bulldozers surrounded his groves. It was harvest time-we were all there. It's a celebration-you know how we've done this for generations. We stood and watched as the army uprooted every tree . . . The soldiers told us to go, but my brother wouldn't move. He is very stubborn . . . But when he came home, he just sat in his chair. . . just staring. He didn't speak. When he finally did, weeks later, it was to ask where he was . . . He left to try to remember (Issaq and Kader 2014: 182-183).

Sari Hanafi (2012) defines spacio-cide as Israel's bureaucratic-military regime mobilized to control the place in the occupies territories. Spacio-cide is achieved not only by the uprootings, but also by state-enforced Afforestation Project. As Ann Laura Stoler contends, "This intensive planting campaign . . . has literally obliterated the very presence of Palestinian villages and farmsteads . . . 'Security groves' have replaced Palestinian olive orchards with cypress; recreational parks dense with eucalyptus trees smooth over Palestinian cemeteries" (2013;20). Such systematic annihilation of land not only distorts the sociocultural and economic fabric of the Palestinian people, but also obliterates cultural spaces which are central to safeguarding culture (Öcal 2007).

Lucas Lixinski's (2018) suggestion concerning the conceptualization of food as heritage under the international heritage regime captures the multilevel aspect of Palestinian *culinary sumud* as a set of daily, bottom-up praxis. Lixinski (2018; 488) notes, "food as ICH remains largely an isolated and fairly discrete way of thinking about food as an object of international legal attention, and it misses complex web of interrelations" unless it is articulated with other dimensions of food in international law." In this sense, Israel's control and transformation of land through a bureaucratic-military regime of curfews, bans, checkpoints, the Separation Wall, and restrictions on movement that loom largely beyond Fadwa's kitchen raises questions concerning "food and livelihood security, agro-biodiversity (Lixinski 2018; 481), and sustainability of the traditional agricultural expertise Palestinians have accumulated for generations.

Fadwa's insistence to use the last half a dozen bottles of olive oil from her grandmother's groves for the wedding is a counter-hegemonic act of resistance in its deliberate reclamation of her people's cultural heritage whose preservation and survival is intimately related to issues of land control. I argue that the contexts that makes olive oil an emblem of *culinary sumud* embodied in the Fawzi family's everyday acts of food heritage making and safeguarding is twofold: The first is the historical, socio-cultural context represented by the grandmother, Tayta, whose attachment to her trees is imbued with the same feelings she has for her children and her kin, connects Palestinians across generations and time to the historic Palestinian homeland, tying a people to its alleged ancestral territory. "In this way, it provides the material evidence of a people's roots in and rightful ownership of that territory. It tells a nation's story by giving it a rooted past but also a set of values and a sense of continuity and futurity" (De Cesari 2019, 8). Hence, Tayta's olive oil provides a medium for a transitive reciprocity amongst Palestinians that regenerates nationhood fused with its land, its food and past and future generations. The second context is the Israeli state's colonial, hegemonic apparatus of control and intimidation which manifests itself in the sudden curfews, blackouts, and water shortages in the play. It is against this backdrop that grandma Tayta's last bottles of olive oil are consumed. The curfew as a systematic discipline of the Israeli state to terrorize a people into submission is countered and shrugged off through Fadwa's relentless resignification of food. On the tenth day of the curfew, there is nothing left to eat but truly little olive oil which Youssef

pours into several cups, saying “Come on everyone. It’s nourishment” (Issaq and Kader 2014: 181). The wedding food now becomes the food of resistance and perseverance as well as that of performing the nation:

FADWA. How to cook when facing starvation due to military incursion: A three-step guide. One: storing and canning food for future use. Two: finding creative ways to serve less food with the magic that is food presentation! And three: rationing. You see here, I have portioned food for each family member according to their needs (Issaq and Kader 2014:166).

Performing the nation through culinary *sumud* occurs at two different levels: First, Fadwa cooks food which represents Palestinian cultural and national identity, using traditional Palestinian food items belonging to and growing on the Palestinian homeland such as olive oil, and za’tar, the foraging of which is legally banned by the Israeli state. Knafi, one of the Arab/Palestinian desserts, tabbouli, a mainstay of the Palestinian kitchen like hummus, falafel, and baba ghanoush, all of which are appropriated by the Israeli state’s culinary colonialism (Abunimah 2014; Ichijo and Ranta 2016; Zogby 2018) find their way to Fadwa’s kitchen table. Second, these traditional Palestinian dishes and olive oil provide a model of survival as well as resistance for the Fawzi family. In other words, what is targeted to be erased, annihilated, and contained by the Israeli state’s ideological apparatuses is turned into gustatory weapons of Palestinian resistance to and subversion of the colonial hegemony of the Israeli state. Despite all forms of coercion and suppression, Fadwa’s perseverance, and resiliency in her culinary tactics, namely her *culinary sumud*, not only ensures the emotional as well as physical survival of her family but also reinscribes each one of them as well as herself into an anti-colonial, emancipatory collective vision and praxis.

When the curfew is over at the end of the tenth day, all the wedding food Fadwa had cooked is gone. “I can always make more,” says Fadwa to her sister Dalal, who is now worried over her wedding celebration because a Palestinian wedding is not a wedding without Palestinian food. Fadwa cooks traditional Palestinian dishes all over again but this time the wedding menu is much more bountiful and splendid with foods coming from kin and neighbors. Hayat, Fadwa’s cousin from the States, is amazed when she sees the wedding meal re-created from scratch: “I don’t know how they manage it. Just two days ago no one had anything.” As Lori Allen (2008: 456) contends: “In these conditions where the routine and assumptions of daily life are physically disrupted, purposefully and as part of the political program of Israeli colonialism, everyday life in Palestine—in its everydayness—is itself partly the result of concerted, collective production.” While during the curfew traditional Palestinian dishes such as tabouli, hummus, knafi, baba ghanoush become the sole means of survival through and resistance to the occupation, after the curfew they become an expression of Palestinian history, cultural tradition, the preservation and continuation of which is intimately tied up with Palestinian claims to land and sovereignty. In this sense, Dalal and Emir’s wedding with its Palestinian food, music, dance, joy, and laughter operates as part of a much longer Palestinian resistance to the colonization of their culture, food and land.

By the end of the play, Youssef and Hayat are about to leave for the United States, but this time accompanied by the newly wed Dalal and Emir. Baba is dead, and Fadwa is the only one, who chooses to stay behind:

YOUSSEF. What’s holding you here, Fadwa? You’re free to go anywhere now.

FADWA. This is home. And someone has to find a home for these little trees. (Issaq and Kader 2014:185)

Fadwa's planting olive trees in their backyard in the memory of her father is also an act of culinary *sumud*, which has manifold meanings: Planting olive trees in a grove torn and desiccated by the Israeli occupation forces explicates the sense of resistance and endurance of the Palestinian people, for whom more than anything the olive tree and its culinary products olive and olive oil have come to symbolize steadfast resistance to the Israeli occupation. Fadwa's olive tree planting asserts the imperative of and both the right and responsibility to gather/cultivate traditional Palestinian foods on the historic land of Palestine, to resiliently continue Palestinian food practices around food cultivation and preparation such as foraging, olive harvesting, olive oil extraction and consumption to decolonize traditional Palestinian food culture from the incursions of Israeli culinary colonialism.

In her criticism of the 2003 Convention's conceptualization of ICH, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues, "Indeed one of UNESCO's criteria for designation as a masterpiece of intangible cultural heritage is the vitality of the phenomenon in question: if it is truly vital, it does need safeguarding; if it is almost dead, safeguarding will not help" (2004:7). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's criticism concerns safeguarding ICH in times of peace. But what about safeguarding ICH in a settler-colonial context where the colonizing power is the sole perpetrator of the destruction of indigenous cultural heritage and yet, at the same time its appropriator? In his critical appraisal of the 2003 Convention, Richard Kurin notes,

Thousands of human cultures today face a myriad of challenges. Whether they survive or flourish depends upon so many things – the freedom and desire of culture bearers, an adequate environment, a sustaining economic system, a political context within which their very existence is at least tolerated. Actions to safeguard 'tangibilized' inventoried items of cultural production are unlikely to safeguard adequately the larger, deeper, more diffuse intangible cultural patterns and contexts (2004:75).

Unquestionably, *Food and Fadwa* is a testimony to Kurin's argument. Fadwa, as a bearer of culture, struggles, with perseverance and steadfastness, to safeguard and continue traditional Palestinian culinary culture in a settler-colonial context to which none of the conditions that Kurin deems to be essential to the survival of cultures apply. Her *culinary sumud* as a daily, bottom-up, multi-level, and constantly evolving praxis to safeguard and sustain Palestinian food culture is far removed from the 2003 Convention's actions to safeguard food ICH "through inventoried items of cultural production" (Kurin 2004:75). This is because, firstly, safeguarding traditional Palestinian food culture is imbricated in Palestinians' claims to land and sovereignty, and, secondly, safeguarding Palestinian food culture necessitates to see into the manifold, interrelated meanings that food accumulates in a settler-colonial context: the eradication of olive groves to be replaced either by non-endemic plant species or to open up space for new settlers, curbing olive harvesting through unnotified curfews, checkpoints and permit papers, state bans on foraging wild herbs directly relate to issues of biodiversity, livelihood and food security, and to the sustainability of traditional agricultural expertise Palestinians have accumulated for generations. Therefore, I offer *culinary sumud* as a "non-listed" manifestation of "food heritagization" and argue that the play *Food and Fadwa* has much to say about safeguarding, to use the Convention's term, *food intangible heritage*, in a settler-colonial context: safeguarding Palestinian food culture in the context of the Palestine/Israel cannot be achieved through Representative List of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity (Representative List) under the CSICH, but, as Fadwa does, through daily, dynamic, bottom up, multi-level strategies created and changed in direct response to their exigencies;

protecting and sustaining Palestinian food culture is enmeshed with Palestinian right to land and sovereignty; food accumulates multiple meanings other than food as heritage concerning the protection and continuity of Palestinian food culture; Israel's culinary colonialism goes hand in hand with its strategies for territorial expansion, hence, the Separation Wall, the razing of olive groves, afforestation, bans on foraging, unnotified curfews, checkpoints, and permits to move, all targeting the disruption of traditional Palestinian food culture; *culinary sumud* as a daily, constant, dynamic and resilient strategy for safeguarding Palestinian food culture captures the intricate web of power relations revolving around food, therefore it is a far more viable way of preserving and continuing traditional Palestinian food culture than the museumification of Palestinian traditional foods in UNESCO's representative lists.

### Conclusion

Food as cultural heritage made its first appearance on UNESCO World Heritage lists in 2010, spurring food-based heritage claims by nation-states all over the world. This "food heritage fever" (Demossier 2014) has drawn scholarly attention, which aims to highlight how food heritagization is charged with complex political and economic interests. Many scholars have drawn attention to nationalistic sentiments looming behind the food listings of the ICH Convention (Tornatore 2012; Cang 2015; Aykan 2016; Demossier 2016; Ichijo and Ranta 2016; Porciani 2019). However, this burgeoning literature on food and nationalism, in its attempt to uncover the nationalistic sentiments behind food heritagization through the instrumentalization of the 2003 Convention has either completely ignored or contended with sketchy references to the relation between food and nationalism in the context of Palestine/Israel. For example, Aykan (2016) in her study on the food wars in Western Asia reduced it to just a matter of food wars over the ownership of certain food items in the region.

This study firstly aimed to demonstrate the specific context in which the "food wars" between Israel and Palestine are conducted: Israel's withdrawal from UNESCO in 2018, Palestine's quasi-state condition whose nationhood is challenged and questioned (despite its 2011 admission to UNESCO), Israel's constant violations of International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, and the law of armed conflict in a settler-colonial context. Exploring the ramifications of this context in the Arab American play *Food and Fadwa* showed that the 2003 Convention is ill-equipped to safeguard traditional Palestinian food culture in a settler-colonial context not only in terms of its institutional machinery but also in its limited scope of food that ignores other meanings that accumulate around food other than that of food as heritage.

Fadwa's *culinary sumud* in *Food and Fadwa* (2012) was proposed as a daily, bottom-up, dynamic, and resilient political strategy for safeguarding Palestinian food culture in a settler-colonial context, inextricably linked to Palestinian right to land and sovereignty against Israel's official, top-bottom culinary colonialism which goes hand in hand with territorial expansion. Fadwa's acts of *culinary sumud* enacted over an unnotified, ten-days' curfew in the occupied West Bank demonstrates that safeguarding traditional Palestinian food is intimately related to other aspects of food which are indispensable from the conceptualization of food as cultural heritage: Fadwa cooks traditional Arab/Palestinian dishes such as baba ghanoush, knafi, tabbouleh, mana'eesh which have already found their way into Israeli restaurants and cookbooks. These are culinary acts to counter Israeli's appropriation of traditional Palestinian dishes; she uses za'tar, the mainstay of Arab/Palestinian cuisine, a wild herb in Palestinian food culture that represents redemption and connection to land, yet whose foraging has been legally banned by the Israeli

state under the guise of environmental protection. This culinary act is inextricably connected to issues of livelihood and food security, to “appropriate access to genetic resources,” and to “equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources” (Lixinski 2018: 482), and to land control. Third, Fadwa nourishes her family suffering from hunger and thirst with her grandmother’s last bottles of olive oil, ensuring their well-being and survival: Such act of *culinary sumud* anchors generations of Faranesh family with their land across time and space: This is food as heritage, which anchors Palestinians across generations with their culture, their land, and history, resisting, as defined by Israeli historian Ilan Pappé (2002: 225), “memoricide”, the systematic “erasure of the identity and history of one people in order to write that of another people’s over it.” Next, Fadwa plants saplings of olive tree by the end of the play in their backyard bulldozed to make way for the Separation Wall. Olive tree, its sub-products- olive, olive oil- are central to safeguarding Palestinian food culture, because, firstly they represent traditional agricultural expertise Palestinians have accumulated for generations, secondly, they have significant economic and social impact on the livelihoods and food security of the farmers, and, lastly, olive trees’ erasure, either through burning, bulldozing or afforestation, off the face of land immediately connects to biodiversity and environmental issues. Loss of biodiversity and the ensuing environmental damage (soil erosion, acidification of soil by pine needles) have serious repercussions for safeguarding and sustaining traditional Palestinian food culture (foraging, olive harvesting, olive oil production and consumption, traditional agricultural systems to cultivate and irrigate land, including their related rituals and beliefs). Therefore, Palestinian cultural diversity is intimately related to biodiversity (hence the relation between culture and nature), which is irreversibly related to tensions over land ownership.

Instantiations of *culinary sumud* in *Food and Fadwa* parallel Lucas Lixinski’s argument that safeguarding food ICH is possible only when it is connected to “other regulatory regimes around food” (2018:488), with the exception that food, in all its aforementioned dimensions in *Food and Fadwa*, is irreversibly linked to Palestinian claimsmaking to their land, their history, and sovereignty in a settler-colonial context. That said, *culinary sumud* in *Food and Fadwa* not only uncovers the multiplicity of regulatory regimes and meanings around food in a settler colonial context, but also demonstrates that the ICH Convention, with its limited scope of food, and its well-meaning yet inefficient and non-preemptive principles in *Basic Texts of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (UNESCO 2020: 117-120), falls short of safeguarding Palestinian food ICH in the context of Israel/Palestine conflict. Safeguarding Palestinian food culture is decidedly, and quintessentially, a culturally, politically, territorially, and environmentally informed bottom up resilience conducted on a daily basis. Therefore, I offer *culinary sumud* as “non-listed” expression of food heritagization, which can open up new avenues for alternative understandings and expressions of food heritage making other than those institutionalized conceptions to be found in the lists, inventories, and nominations of the 2003 Convention.

**AUTHORS’ CONTRIBUTION LEVELS:** First Author %100.

**ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL:** Ethics committee approval is not required for the study.

**FINANCAL SUPPORT:** No financial support was received in the study.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** There is no potential conflict of interest in the study

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