The Thesis Committee for Emily Claire Hawthorne
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

Chains of Trust: Halal Certification in the United States

APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor:

Faegheh Shirazi

Hina Azam

Chains of Trust: Halal Certification in the United States

by

Emily Claire Hawthorne, BA

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my dad, Steve Hawthorne, and my mother, Barbara Hawthorne, who have taught me by example that a scholar without a support network is a very weak scholar indeed. I am never sure how to fully thank you for your selfless love and resolute support.

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Abstract

Chains of Trust: Halal Certification in the United States

Emily Claire Hawthorne, MA

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Supervisor: Faegheh Shirazi

The growing halal food sector in America has garnered attention recently in a number of ways regarding changing consumer demands, production yield, and certification standards. Muslim consumers choosing halal food products today combine more objective knowledge about halal food products - learned from jurists, imams, the Qur'an, ḥadīth, and family traditions - with more subjective knowledge about what they want from their food. The resultant mix of objective and subjective information about halal food production standards creates a unique milieu termed, in this thesis, the contemporary consumption context. The small variances between what different Muslim consumers want out of their halal food – particularly in terms of ethical and humane animal treatment – introduce tiny iterations to the timeless religious ritual that halal food consumption and ẓabīḥa, or ritual, slaughter entail.

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Introduction: Trusting Halal Certification

In a dusty yet bustling grocery store in northeast Austin, Texas, a butcher leans forward over the counter to hear the details of a customer's order. The customer wants a pound of the halal chicken breasts, which are on sale for $5.99 a pound according to the poster board on the wall.[1] The chicken is weighed, wrapped in white paper, sealed with a printed sticker, and added to a shopping basket of bread, cheese, and tea. There is nothing immediately remarkable about this transaction. Halal meat has been slaughtered, processed, sold, and consumed for centuries, and the chicken itself looks no different than the non-halal chicken meat packaged in the nearby H-E-B grocery or Mexican meat market.

But while the halal quality of the meat - its "halalness" for lack of any standardized term - is invisible, a distinct difference remains between the halal and non-halal chicken.[2] A halal certification notice on the wall is the only tangible testament to the halal nature of the products on sale at the market, but customers trust it, as well as the verbal confirmation of the storeowner that "all the meat here is halal."[3] One patron told me this market is their favorite in Austin for "fresh, good halal meat." However, not unlike other American food labels marketing food as "all-natural," "organic," "GMO-free," or "kosher," labels certifying food as halal are justifiably subject to scrutiny and doubt in the United States, where food labeling claims have reached a fever pitch.

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[1] According to sociologist Johan Fischer, whose view corroborates with most contemporary definitions, "halal in Arabic means "good" or "permissible," and can be applied to a wide range of products and practices that are part of a Muslim lifestyle." The word halal, however, is most commonly used to apply to food in this thesis.

Johan Fischer. *The Halal Frontier: Muslim Consumers in a Globalized Market*. New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, [1].

[2] A glossary of author-produced terms is provided following Appendix A.

[3] This conversation took place at Madani Halal market in Austin Texas in March 2013.

Despite potential doubts, customers continue to buy halal food at this market and thousands of others across the country, choosing to trust that the products they purchase are indeed halal.

Fueled by globalization, migration, more conscientious consumers, and savvy halal food companies and marketers, the global halal food trade, valued at 700 billion USD in 2013, is only expected to grow in terms of certified halal products available and profit margins for halal food companies.[4] In the US alone, the halal food market is expected to reach 10-20 billion USD by 2015, according to the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America.[5] As old as Islam itself, the sale of halal food has recently received more attention from both Muslim and non-Muslim sources. Questions of standardization and quality control crowd halal journals, and even non-Muslims have noticed the availability of halal products in in the US, in some cases wittingly or unwittingly becoming consumers as well.[6] *Halal Connect* magazine declared the 2010s as the time for "a perfect halal storm" to develop on the horizon, "given the dawning awareness of the spending power of America's 8-9 million Muslims, given that Halal products can be consumed by everyone, and given the global momentum that is gathering around this topic."[7]

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[4] The World Halal Forum 2013, a respected annual meeting of halal industry leaders held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, reported that in 2013, "the global halal market is estimated to be worth more than USD 2.3 trillion and the value of halal food sector is reaching USD 700 billion annually."
"World Halal Forum 2013 | 3-4 April 2013," World Halal Forum, last modified April 3, 2013, accessed April 6, 2014, http://www.worldhalalforum.org/whf_intro.html.

[5] "IFANCA 2012 White Paper: Halal Boosts US Economy & Exports," Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America, last modified June 22, 2012, accessed March 2, 2014, http://www.ifanca.org/cms/wpages/detail/502136ab-9fdc-4233-9b85-23b83239ea6a.

[6] Included in the above-cited IFANCA 2012 Halal White Paper is the statistic that, "according to a recent Pew report, the US Muslim population will grow from 2.6 million in 2010 to 6.2 million by 2030. IFANCA estimates the US Muslim population at 8 million today and doubling by 2030."

[7] Abdalhamid Evans, "A Perfect Storm on the Horizon," *Halal Connect*, July 2009, [14].

Research questions and findings

I am curious about the mechanism of consumers placing trust in halal certification, and in the importance of diverse consumer opinions affecting the halal food industry in the US. Driving questions in the course of my thesis research included: How do consumers trust halal certification labels, and what is happening in the field of halal certification today? How is unity in the American Muslim community preserved in the midst of diversity of opinion regarding halal certification? To attempt to grasp the details of the burgeoning global halal market is to try and shed light on multiple phenomena, all of which have attracted scholarly attention, and all of which point to the importance of the issue of proper certification. Religious, economic, and ethical questions are among the many important issues that arise in the study of the global halal food industry, and while this thesis will touch on them, the focus of this thesis remains on the authority to declare and certify a food as halal. The primary question throughout the next five chapters is: Who claims the authority to determine the "halalness" of a food, and what determines "halalness" for Muslim consumers, particularly in the US?

While the answers to these questions will be more thoroughly unpacked in the following pages, in a nut-shell, what I found overall is that the idea of what is halal and what is not in terms of meat products has traditionally been defined by jurists over many centuries. Their opinions are derived from teachings from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, which will be detailed in chapter two of this thesis. However, today, Muslim consumers make their purchasing and consumption decisions based in large part on this existing knowledge of Islamic teachings as they affect food products, but also based on their own ideas of what constitutes good food. These ideas come from a newer, modern framework

that embraces wholesomeness, healthiness, and cleanliness along with accordance with traditional religious guidelines. This environment in which halal food consumers combine more objective and traditional guidelines - learned from religious school and from growing up in a Muslim family - and subjective guidelines - from their own opinions on what constitutes good food - is what I term the new contemporary consumption context. This contemporary consumption context will be unpacked in the following chapters piece by piece.

Theoretical Bases

Two theoretical bases – focused on consumer behavior and on community and ritual in Islam - support the following analysis, in addition to a number of motifs revisited throughout. Regarding consumer behavior, since a primary focus of this thesis is to explore how Muslim consumers trust halal-certified foods, I am interested in the mechanisms of consumer choice, for which a simplified version of the Theory of Planned Behavior by Icek Ajzen helps significantly. Ajzen is known for having derived the "Theory of Planned Behavior," one of the "most influential and popular conceptual frameworks for the study of human action."[8] The theory states that "subjective norms" help "shape an individual's behavioral intentions and behaviors."[9] According to this framework, understanding why Muslim consumers choose to trust in a halal label and choose to buy and consume a product requires comprehending:

> …three kinds of considerations: beliefs about the likely consequences or other attributes of the behavior (behavioral beliefs), beliefs about the normative expectations of other people (normative beliefs), and beliefs about the presence of

8 Ajzen, "Perceived Behavioral Control, Self-Efficacy," [665].
9 Ibid.

> factors that may further or hinder performance of the behavior (control beliefs). In their respective aggregates, behavioral beliefs produce a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the behavior; normative beliefs result in perceived social pressure or subjective norm; and control beliefs give rise to perceived behavioral control, the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior. In combination, attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perception of behavioral control lead to the formation of a behavioral intention."[10]

Behavioral beliefs and normative beliefs in the context of the consumption of halal food include the probability that a consumer will buy the same halal product as their family members, as well as the understanding among a community of Muslim consumers that they are expected to consume halal products in order to live a spiritually appropriate lifestyle. The imam of a local Austin, TX mosque informed me that this "understanding" is typically knowledge shared from older family members to younger family members. Religious schooling and lessons gained by attending Friday services also influence normative behavior among Muslims. The norm among American Muslim consumers is to seek out halal food products, but to not stress incessantly about the authenticity of that halal product, because what matters most is mental intention to behave in a spiritually appropriate way.[11] As such, consumers intend to purchase authentically halal products but also relinquish a lot of control to the distributors, certifiers, and retailers who provide their halal products. As one retailer told me in Austin, "we leave a lot up to the

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[10] Ajzen, "Perceived Behavioral Control, Self-Efficacy," [665].

[11] Ajzen paraphrases his idea of behavioral beliefs on his University of Massachusetts website as follows: "Behavioral beliefs link the behavior of interest to expected outcomes. A behavioral belief is the subjective probability that the behavior will produce a given outcome. Although a person may hold many behavioral beliefs with respect to any behavior, only a relatively small number are readily accessible at a given moment. It is assumed that these accessible beliefs -- in combination with the subjective values of the expected outcomes -- determine the prevailing attitude toward the behavior. Specifically, the evaluation of each outcome contributes to the attitude in direct proportion to the person's subjective probability that the behavior produces the outcome in question."

Icek Ajzen, "Attitude Toward the Behavior," Icek Azjen, accessed April 6, 2014, http://people.umass.edu/aizen/att.html.

distributor, to do the right thing;" the right thing in this case being the delivery of properly certified halal food products.

In addition to this helpful framework for understanding how Muslim consumers gain knowledge on what to eat and not to eat, theories from the field of religious anthropology, specifically from Victor Turner and René Girard help clarify how individual consumer choices and trust relationships between different nodes of the halal production chain (consumers, producers, retailers, and certifiers) all function as part of a shared religious ritual. To Turner and Girard, religious rituals represent repetition of learned values and knowledge, yes, but it is the little iterations and changes in the ritual that keep those practices fresh and relevant. Turner and Girard help us understand how daily consumption of halal food and engagement in ẓabīḥa slaughter are part of a communal ritual that helps unite the *umma*, or Muslim community, which in turn helps affirm *tawhīd*, or the oneness of God.

With respect to community and ritual in Islam, understanding how the *umma* maintains its coherence is key to understanding why halal food consumption and ẓabīḥa slaughter are important. The original idea behind, what Asma Asfaruddin terms the "single community," the *umma wahida*, in her book *The First Muslims,* was a "multi-tribal and multi-faith community comprised of Migrant Muslims, the Medinan Muslims, and the Jews . . . [and] membership [was] predicated on honorable behavior."[12] Marshall G.S. Hodgson describes the diverse original *umma* as very tolerant of different practices and traditions, but admits that there were unification struggles (which 'Umar and Abu Bakr struggled with), as they wrestled with how "to define the nature of the authority" of

[12] Asma Asfaruddin. *The First Muslims: History and Memory*. Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, [6].

the community.[13] Since its origins in the days of the Constitution of Medina, the idea of the *umma* has morphed into a more religion-specific concept, i.e., Jews have their own *umma*, Christians have their own *umma,* and Muslims their own *umma*. Most pertinent for this thesis is considering how the Muslim *umma* maintained its unity throughout centuries until today. According to Reza Aslan in his book *No god but God*, the teachings of the Islamic jurists and religious scholars are "the only institutions in the modern world that have had any measure of success in uniting the Muslim community under a single banner."[14] Included in those teachings are the widely followed tenets concerning the consumption of halal food and the processes behind ẓabīḥa slaughter, to be detailed in the beginning pages of Chapter One. Religious rituals are, in part, learned from these teachings, and hold an important infrastructural function in religious culture.

Methodology

My research methodology for this study relied on reviewing publications from thought leaders among American halal industry stakeholders in sources like *Halal Connect*, followed by conducting IRB-approved interviews with eight such stakeholders on the subject of halal certification in the US in 2014. Additionally, reviewing the steady stream of media coverage on halal in the US proved necessary to gauge the developments in this changing and growing niche of the food market. Finally, two-dozen unofficial interviews in halal markets and restaurants in Austin, TX, Houston, TX, and Queens, NY provided context and confirmation for findings regarding consumer choices in the American Muslim community, which is always changing, just as any religious subgroup

[13] Marshall G.S. Hodgson. *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974, [207].
[14] Reza Aslan. *No god but God*. New York, New York: Random House, 2006, [139].

shifts and evolves in a contemporary context. Attending American Muslim Consumer Consortium conferences in 2010 and 2012 also proved insightful, as did a series of interviews of Halal butchers in France in 2010.

I chose to research halal in 2010 until today because it is a subject cradled within a context of change. In our day, a centuries-old tradition – the consumption of halal food - is undergoing noteworthy shifts. Certification is a fascinating and controversial lens through which to view halal food that places this study firmly under the umbrella of modernization studies. The sale of halal food, a pedestrian occurrence common worldwide, acquires added significance in the 21st century due to the phenomenon of accelerating globalization. Also, within fields of study, halal food occupies a unique location at the crux of contemporary religious anthropology, consumer culture, food studies, and globalization. The study of the certification processes behind halal food production brings these fields together.

The great amount of trust that a consumer must place in halal certification processes, verified verbally or by checking a printed label, points to the existence of a gap that Muslim consumers have to cross themselves, something I have termed the "certification gap." This gap only exists today to a large extent because so much food production is shielded from consumers' eyes, part of the negative consequences of living in the contemporary consumption context. In crossing this gap, consumers make conscious choices that connect them to the origins of halal as a religious ritual and as a marker of community through a chain of trust with other parts of the halal food production chain. The Theory of Planned Behavior elucidates these choices, which will be further covered in chapter four. The intention and choice to consume halal food

functions as a marker of identity for Muslims, and even within the halal category itself, myriad further distinctions separate certain categories of "halalness" from others, all of which Muslim consumers must choose to confront and understand as they determine what is important to them in the halal food they consume.

Because halal is found in a sort of interstitial space, in a no-man's land of shifting definitions, a new individual and consumer-driven definition for halal is actively forming in the 21st century. As editor of *Halal Connect* Abdalhamid Evans wrote in 2009, Muslim consumers in America hold a "significant degree of influence" over the future path of the Halal Industry. Consumers can shape the industry if they "form local consumer groups, lobby for more halal products, better standards, more transparency, [and] moral and ethical business transactions."[15] Even while businesses, governments, and marketers try to shape the definition of halal worldwide, the individual consumer will always decide upon their own final definition of halal, based on gathering information from their families, from religious leaders, from tradition, and from market availability. As will be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis, the individual holds the power to shape new definitions of halal because at the end of the chain running from food production to eating, halal food consumption is an individual nourishment choice. In choosing to cross the certification gap, (that is, by choosing to trust that what they are consuming is indeed halal), individual Muslim consumers reaffirm their identity as members of the global Muslim community.

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15 Evans, "A Perfect Storm on the Horizon," [14].

Organization

Chapter one will explore the halal industry from the religious studies angle: What do Islamic scholars say about halal, and how do modern consumers demand that religious tenets apply to their food choices? What is the commonly understood definition of halal and ẓabīḥa slaughter, and where does it come from? This chapter contains an example of how to conduct an exegetical study in order to further understand the background behind some consumer demands – in this case, the demands from American Muslims for more ethical and humane "eco-halal" food, which is one of the most timely consumer demands today. Qur'anic exegesis unlocks the most basic religious rules governing halal food consumption, and contemporary summaries of the ḥadīth – sayings and actions of the Prophet Mohammad – that are available that help Muslims make good food choices. For example, books like *Dos and Do Nots in Islam* and *The Tablespread of the Holy Prophet* are collections of selected Prophetic ḥadīth that list what is appropriate and inappropriate for a Muslim to eat when in certain situations, based on what the Prophet Mohammad did himself during his lifetime.[16] A religious studies angle also illuminates some of the similarities between halal and kosher food production.[17] Kosher food production, from the slaughtering process to its stringent distribution and retail, bears a striking

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16 Abdul Rehmad, Shad. *Dos and Do Nots in Islam*. Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1983; Mohammad Faisal. *The Tablespread of the Holy Prophet*. Karachi, Pakistan: Darul-Ishaat Urdu Bazar, 2001), [6].

17 The term "kosher," according to scholar Timothy D. Lytton, "drives from the Hebrew word *kasher*, meaning 'fit' or 'proper.' The basis for kosher dietary restrictions – *kashrus* (or *kashrut*) in Hebrew – is various passages in the Hebrew scriptures that govern food consumption and food preparation. For example, the Torah prohibits eating certain specis of animals, such as pork and shellfish, and it proscribes cooking a kid in its mother's milk. Rabbinic law, stretching from the beginning of the Common Era to today, has developed these rudimentary biblical precepts into a system of detailed laws. For instance, the proscription of cooking a kid in its mother's milk has developed into a more general prohibition against the mixing of meat and dairy products in the same food or even in the same meal."

Timothy D. Lytton, *Kosher: Private Regulation in the Age of Industrial Food* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), [7].

resemblance to halal food. Both *Studies in Vayikra (Leviticus)* and *The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus* reveal just how similar in process and purpose ẓabīḥa (halal) and schechitah (kosher) slaughter truly are in the religious law texts.[18] Chapter One will also introduce Victor Turner's theories on religious ritual (to be revisited in chapter five), to help us understand how consuming and choosing halal food is part of a communal religious ritual conducted by individual Muslims.

Chapter Two will approach understanding halal from an economic perspective - How is halal becoming a global market, and why is it such a potentially profitable niche, subject to customization based on consumer demand? According to publications like *Altmuslim* and *Halal Connect,* some Muslim consumers worldwide, especially in America, demand halal products that measure up to increasingly stringent standards.[19] Globalization only seems to be an issue to consumers insofar as it negatively affects their personal standards for halal and "*tayyib*" food – a distinction to be explored in this chapter. Making sure that halal food is also "*tayyib*," or good and wholesome, has become an imperative for some halal companies, including the American niche movement of "eco-halal" companies, like Saffron Road, Norwich Meadows Farms in New York State, Crescent Foods, and Green Zabiha. These companies answer not only to the demand among some American Muslim consumers for more hygienically and ethically produced halal foods, but are also answering the demands of non-Muslim

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[18]Nehama Leibowitz. *Studies in Vayikra (Leviticus)*. Jerusalem, Israel: World Zionist Organization, 1980; Levine, Baruch A., comp. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus*. New York, NY: Jewish Publication Society, 1989.

[19] Patheos. "Sustainability: The eco-halal revolution." Altmuslim. Last modified December 4, 2009. Accessed April 19, 2013. http://www.patheos.com/blogs/altmuslim/2009/12/the_eco-halal_revolution/; Salama Evans. "Beefing Up the Concept of Halal and Tayyib in Muslim Consumers." *Halal Connect,* July 2009, [26-28].

consumers for "ethnic" foods that measure up to strict standards of production.[20] Higher standards for marketing to Muslims are highlighted in articles like Samir Abuznaid's *Islamic Marketing: Addressing the Muslim Market* and the *Guardian*'s recent coverage of more ethical standards for halal in the UK in the May 2014 article "Ethical, Organic, Safe: The Other Side of Halal Food."[21] The main actor in this article is Shazia Saleem, a British entrepreneur who was "keen to uphold the "wholesome and pure" part of Islamic strictures, which she believes begins not just with slaughter, but way back in the supply chain and goes on through to a business's profits," and who said that "a lot of time is spent focusing on halal, and 50% of the instructions – the *tayyib* part – often get ignored."[22] Articles like these point to the multiple levels of standards of which marketers must be cognizant when seeking to break into the halal industry to satisfy increasingly aware consumers. Abuznaid underlines the spiritual importance of conducting food production ethically, and Muslim consumers, especially in America, increasingly support better ethical standards in food production. Chapter Two will also cover the potential negative effects of a booming global halal industry on consumer trust and the widening definition of halal and "halalness." One part of ethical business practices is representing products truthfully in marketing and advertising, and halal certification agencies are key parts of this chain that can choose to operate honestly or deceitfully in exchange for more

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[20] American Halal Association. "What is Halal." Crescent Foods. Last modified 2013. Accessed April 20, 2013. http://crescenthalal.com/index.php/sample-faq-post-1/;
American Halal Company. "Why Choose Saffron Road." Saffron Road. Accessed April 20, 2013. http://www.saffronroadfood.com/our-story/why-choose-saffron-road-2/;
Green Zabiha: A Blessing in Every Bite. Accessed April 19, 2013. http://www.greenzabiha.com/;
"Eco-halal Meat Project." Norwich Meadows Farm. Last modified 2008. Accessed April 20, 2013. http://www.norwichmeadowsfarm.com/halalmeat.htm.

[21] Abuznaid, Samir. "Islamic Marketing: Addressing the Muslim Market." *Humanities* 26, no. 6 (December 2, 2012): 1473-503.

[22] Carla Power, "Ethical, organic, safe: the other side of halal food," *The Guardian* (London, UK), May 17, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/may/18/halal-food-uk-ethical-organic-safe.

profits, by unscrupulously awarding halal certifications and labels. Certain halal labels prove more trustworthy than others, and owning the rights to producing certain labels could provide significant monetary benefit to whatever agency, company, or association undertakes the certification responsibilities. For this reason, suspicious certification agencies exist, and the push for a singular global halal accreditation body persists, to provide assurance of "halalness" to consumers. For American consumers in particular, as the Huffington Post reported in 2013, "inconsistent halal standards and fraudulent advertising" have "riled" the American Muslim community.[23]

Chapter Three will address these issues of fraudulent certification, and some of the details of the halal certification processes in the US, illuminating the complications therein. In attempting to answer the question of who holds the authority to claim that meat or food is or isn't halal, one immediately discovers that many organizations worldwide seek to own that authority, while there are many agencies in the US seeking to be viewed as authorities in that space, meaning that one discovers a contest between international and domestic agencies. Halal certification standardization and accreditation indeed emerge as entities urgently needed in order to solve the perceived certification gap, but the proliferation of certifying bodies in the halal industry means that despite increased attempts to simplify decisions for the consumer, the ocean of choice usually push more responsibility in the lap of the consumer to decide what is and isn't halal. I developed a series of questions to ask halal industry stakeholders about the role of the consumer and the changes occurring in the realm of halal certification. I analyze them in

[23] Omar Sacirbey, "Halal Food Fraud Worries Muslim-American Community," HuffPost Religion, last modified June 27, 2013, accessed February 7, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/27/halal-food-fraud_n_3513016.html.

this chapter to help buttress the notion that while industry standards vary, Muslim consumer power in deciding what they want from their halal food is undeniably important. The implications of this focus on the individual's own authority means that halal consumption is as intensely personal as it is communal.

Chapter Four will take a closer look at halal certification by zooming in on the trust relationships between consumers and producers in Muslim communities in Austin, Texas and Houston, Texas, and Queens, New York to offer a more nuanced view of what goes into halal certification in a particular locale. The chain of trust in halal authenticity and certification is intriguing to explore at close-range. A simplified version of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior supports the notion that consumers in the contemporary consumption context combine subjective and objective information about halal products and the ẓabīḥa process to make their purchasing and eating decisions. Other sociologists focused on modernization issues, like Zygmunt Bauman and Robert Witt, write about the layers of influence taken into consideration when a consumer selects a product to buy, and their ideas prove useful here. Multiple levels of stimuli combine to help consumers trust the word of their restaurateurs and butchers, who trust their distributors, who in turn trust their certifiers and farmers regarding the 'halalness' of a food or food product.

Chapter Five will revisit Victor Turner's idea of religious ritual, linking his concept of communitas to the powerful and important Islamic concept of the *umma*.[24]

[24] Edward Campo defines tawhīd simply in the Encyclopedia of Islam as "a starting point for Muslim THEOLOGY (known as kalam), which was concerned with the issue of God's oneness, especially as it pertained to his attributes." Campo also describes the more complex connotations of tawhīd , including the ideas of "ABU AL-QASIM AL-JUNAYD (d. 910) [who] spoke of how God's assistance was needed to annihilate the self and abide in union with him. He also identified four aspects of tawhid: one for the common people in accordance with belief in one God, one for devout Muslims who are outwardly doing what God commanded and prohibited, and two for spiritual virtuosos who transcend the first two aspects and calmly bear witness to the divine reality, and then become immersed in God's unity, as they were

Muslim society – the *umma* – is strengthened and united through building communities of knowledgeable individuals. In making an individual decision based on individual standards, a Muslim consumer purchasing halal is conducting a personal act that links them to a communal and traditional ritual – a key factor in Turner's communitas. As such, companies and certification agencies have no true control over consumers, only some degree of influence that consumers may choose to trust or reject. Muslim consumers drive the halal market each time they choose to partake in the halal ritual at any point in the food production chain, and their choices and demands determine the availability of certain halal products, like eco-halal. Thus, regardless of halal food scandals and certification doubts and marketing schemes and the race for profits, Muslim consumers remain in control of what they personally consume and whether or not it is truly halal.

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before they ever existed." This definition of tawhīd, which includes Muslims' behavior within the concept of God's oneness, is the most helpful in this thesis.
Edward Campo, "tawhid (Arabic: to proclaim God as one; monotheism)," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. J. Gordon Melton, Facts on File Library of Religion and Mythology: Encyclopedia of World Religions (New York, NY: n.p., 2009), [665-666], accessed May 2, 2014, http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX1692200526&v=2.1&u=txshracd2598&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w&asid=fe2a60259fbdcf8812305302fd961b8d.

Chapter 1: Halal as Religious Ritual

This chapter seeks to establish the basic definitional building blocks of halal in Islam, as it is laid out in the Qur'an and the Sunna, or the way and habits of the Prophet Mohammad. Muslim consumers' own opinions on halal may vary, but as a baseline, the following analysis presents a summary of what some contemporary Muslim scholars say about halal food, as well as an example of how exegetical study can unearth Qur'anic support for contemporary definitions of halal, such as the "eco-halal" niche which seeks out food that is *tayyib* – "safe, clean, healthy, wholesome, green, natural" – as well as "permissible" and which "begins at the birth of the animal and continues right through its slaughter."[25] This chapter will also present the theoretical framework that allows us to view halal slaughter and consumption as a religious ritual. Based on Victor Turner's theories on religious ritual, ẓabīḥa slaughter and the choice to consume halal food can be understood as part of a communal ritual that reinforces the unity of the Muslim community, even if Muslim consumers perform that ritual unconsciously or subconsciously on a daily basis simply by choosing to buy or consume a halal product.

Proper halal certification seeks to communicate to the consumer that the Qur'anic guidelines governing halal food production have been fulfilled, which is why it is important to delve into those guidelines here. Nonetheless, as this chapter will explore, the actual halalness of the food is not derived so much from the proper fulfillment of the guidelines but instead from the appropriate intentions of the individual Muslim consumer. Certification agencies perform a service that can ease the decision-making process for a Muslim consumer, but what is truly essential for a food to be halal are the correct

[25] Evans, "Beefing up the Concept of Halal and Tayyib," [28].

intentions and the desire to consume something good and appropriate in the eyes of God (according to man's understanding of what pleases God).

The differences between ritual slaughter and non-ritual slaughter do not attract a lot of media attention, perhaps because the interior workings of slaughterhouses are not the particularly palatable to public eyes. In most American slaughterhouses, animals are herded from trucks into fenced lots to wait as a group. The livestock are typically marched forward in single file toward lanes that convert to conveyor belts. An employee with a metal bolt gun or a stun gun stands at the end of a conveyor belt, either shocking the animal unconscious or inserting a thin metal rod into the animal's brain, causing death or unconsciousness. Bill Haw, CEO of one of the largest slaughterhouses in America in Kansas City, described the American slaughterhouse as:

> Not a pretty thing. I mean, it's a necessary process. It's a highly efficient process. But it's not now, nor never will be, a very pretty thing. Animals come there to die, to be eviscerated, to be decapitated, to be de-hided -- and all of those are violent, bloody and difficult things to watch. So your first and foremost impression of at least the initial stages of the packing house are a very violent, very dehumanizing sort of thing."[26]

Ẓabīḥa slaughter, in contrast to conventional non-ritual slaughter, introduces a humanizing element, even while still bloody and potentially upsetting. The actual act of slaughter is supposed to be performed by a human who invites God to preside over and witness the act, with utmost respect for the animal. The animal's jugular vein is slit using a very sharp knife following the utterance of a brief blessing, and all the animal's blood is drained out. Schechitah slaughter, which produces kosher meat, is conducted following nearly the same guidelines. There are instances of ẓabīḥa and schechitah slaughterhouses performing ritual slaughter on a large scale in unsanitary or mechanized circumstances,

[26] http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/meat/slaughter/slaughterhouse.html

however, many view halal and kosher slaughter as more humane, when conducted carefully and skillfully. Some observers claim that conventionally slaughtered animals are still alive even if unconscious following the electrocution, stunning, or metal rod implantation that constitutes the first step in conventional slaughter. The guidelines governing ẓabīḥa slaughter have been passed down for centuries since the advent of Islam, the details of which are explored below.

Halal in the Qur'an and Sunna

So what is halal in its most basic sense, as it relates to animals and the foods humans produce from them? Where does it come from in the Qur'an, and what conclusions can we draw from analyzing the relevant Qur'anic verses? In "Halal Food Production," author Muhammad Chaudry helpfully summarizes the origin of "basic guidance about the halal food laws" as being "revealed in the Quran (the divine book) from God (the Creator) to Muḥammad (the Prophet) for all people. The food laws are explained and put into practice through the Sunna (the life, actions and teachings of Muḥammad) as recorded in the ḥadīth (the compilation of the traditions of Muḥammad."[27] Food laws in the Qur'an are remarkably straightforward, considering the all-encompassing importance of food in humans' lives. The food laws revealed to the prophet Muḥammad are considered to be among the muḥkāmāt, the "foundation of Islamic belief" and the "basic religious duties imposed on every Muslim."[28] These food

[27] Mian N. Riaz and Muhammad M. Chaudry, *Halal Food Production* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2004), [5].
[28] Leah Kinberg, "Muhkamat and Mutashabihat (Koran 3/7): Implication of a Koranic Pair of Terms in Medieval Exegesis," *Arabica* 35, no. 2, July 1988, [292].

laws are contained in chapters that are traditionally categorized as "containing legislative material" in a way that is "concrete," which detracts from the possible existence of a grey area surrounding their jurisprudence.[29] This chapter begins by exploring Qur'an 2:172-173, Qur'an 5:1, 3-5, and Qur'an 6:121, 145, and 146, where one finds most basic guidelines for ẓabīḥa slaughter, the first step in the halal food production chain.[30] Exploring the corresponding *tafasīr* - or explanations and analysis - of *al-Jalālayn* and *Ibn Kathīr*, and of *al-Wāhidī's Asbāb an-nuzūl* illuminates the meaning of these verses. Even cursory exegetical analysis of these verses uncovers a strong sense of how God uses His power to direct His followers to good things through their consumption choices. I argue that among many aspects of the contemporary definition of halal for which one can find Qur'anic support, the Qur'anic definition of halal contains a directive to treat creation justly and to approach food consumption choices with awareness, based on what God wills for his creation. This falls in line with what many American Muslim consumers are demanding today in terms of more ethical and humane halal food, embodied in the push for *tayyib* and eco-halal. The idea of awareness, too, foreshadows our discussion on the importance of consumer intention.

Furthermore, important to note is that the Qur'anic definition of halal strongly relates to consumer choice and divine separation. God choosing a people and providing them with food that is good and nourishing for them and the subsequent choice of those people to partake in the nourishment is a conscious agreement between the creator and the created. Halal certification agencies may mark a food product as halal, but these spiritual connections between a Muslim believer and God are only formed through

[29] Daniel A. Madigan, "Themes and Topics," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006, [93].
[30] Quran, Tr. Yusuf Ali, 2:172-173, 5:1, 3-5, 6:121, 145-146.

personal, individual acts of worship, of which halal consumption is key.

Performing exegetical analysis in order to explore a specific facet of halal consumption – the moral, ethical aspects of slaughtering an animal, one of the biggest sources of contention surrounding ẓabīḥa slaughter today – reveals that the definition of halal is remarkably flexible and wide in the Qur'an. This supports the idea that humans themselves, Muslim believers, create any extra meaning added to the ritual of Islamic slaughter and halal food consumption, based on their own beliefs about halal and living a good, moral, spiritually correct life.

As initially defined in the introduction, halal in Arabic means "good" or "permissible," and can be applied to a wide range of products and practices that are part of a Muslim lifestyle. The word halal, however, is most commonly used to apply to food. Reviewing the Qur'anic chapters Al-Baqarah, Al-Ma'idah, and Al-An'am – specifically the verses 2:172-173, 5:1, 3-5, and 6:121, 145, 146 – and consulting the tafasīr with respect to these specific verses reveals a general injunction toward comprehensive, intentional, and thoughtful consumption, prescribed for all Muslims.[31] Only in examining ḥadith literature and more contemporary commentary on the Qur'anic guidelines does one discover very specific guidelines concerning what exactly to eat and not eat.

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[31] Ibn Kathīr. *Tafsīr al-Qurān al-Karīm*. Amman, Jordan: Altafsir.com, 1366. http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=7&tSoraNo=6&tAyahNo=121&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1;
Jalāl ad-dīn asuyutī wa Jalāl ad-dīn almahalī. *Tafsīr al Jalālayn,* Amman, Jordan: Altafsir.com, 1505. http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=8&tSoraNo=5&tAyahNo=1&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1;
al-Wāhidī. *Kitāb asbāb al-nuẓūl*. Amman, Jordan: Altafsir.com, 1060. http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=86&tSoraNo=6&tAyahNo=121&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=2.

Centuries of tradition and family practices, too, impact what Muslim consumers view to be halal or haram (not permissible for consumption or practice).

The previously mentioned Qur'anic verses are the most essential of guidelines that relate specifically to food laws. While several other Qur'anic verses refer to or repeat the same injunctions, these include the most necessary guidelines, and thus merit exploration. In Qur'an 2:172-173, in *al-Baqarah*, it is revealed that God has provided *tayyibāt,* or "good things" and "wholesome things" for Muslim believers to eat, and humans are implored to be grateful for these good things. Pork is to be avoided, as well as a number of other types of meat as mentioned below in the English translation of the Qur'anic verses:

> O ye who believe! Eat of the (good things) that We have provided for you, and be grateful to Allah, if it is Him ye worship. He hath only forbidden you dead meat, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that on which any other name hath been invoked besides that of Allah. But if one is forced by necessity, without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits,- then is he guiltless. For Allah is Oft-forgiving Most Merciful.[32]

Al-Jalālayn's *tafsīr* proposes that these *tayibbāt* - these good, pleasant, delightful, delicious, or sweet things - are in fact equated with "lawful" things, the *ḥalalāt*, that God has provided only to believers.[33] There is a sense from this *tafsīr* that all things that come from God are made lawful. God has *aḥalla* these foods – actively made them good and lawful for his believers. An additional interesting aspect of the meaning of halal comes from al-Jalālayn's commentary on 2:173.[34] al-Jalālayn mentions not eating pork as an example of how God keeps Muslim believers pure.[35] Ibn Kathīr proposes that consuming

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[32] Qur'an, Tr. Yusuf Ali, 2:172-173.
[33] Jalāl ad-dīn asuyutī wa Jalāl ad-dīn almahalī. *Tafsīr al Jalālayn (*Amman, Jordan: Altafsir.com, 1505) 2:172.
[34] *Tafsīr al Jalālayn,* 2:173.
[35] "li annahu mu'atham almaqsūd", from *Tafsīr al Jalālayn,* 2:173.

only from that which is good is a "reason" or precursor to God "accepting worship and prayer".[36] It follows from this that a relationship exists between eating good things and living life in accordance with God's law. Those not living in accordance with the law, and subsequently not eating of the good things, are deemed as unworthy of all good things that God has provided, according al-Jalālayn's *tafsīr*. God is lenient when a believer is forced to eat something unlawful, but God is never lenient when a believer acts with sinful intentions. Indeed, "the aggressors, the transgressors, the fugitives, or the excise collectors" are acting in an "unlawful" manner if they eat any of the forbidden things, because they are not intentional about living in submission to God's law.[37] If someone consumes food that is *mashbūh* (its halal or haram status is unverified) or *makruh* (detestable or almost certainly haram) or haram, but intends fully to live in submission to God and they were only forced out of necessity, then their act of consumption can still be considered halal and God is forgiving. This point will be important as we cover the verses from *al-Baqarah* that establish the domain of halal foods as category of consumption through which God sets His believers apart from the rest of humanity. A link between what is lawful and what is good or pleasant is illuminated through the *tafsīr*. Halal foods are what God has made lawful, or "*aḥalla lakum*" and honorable intentions on the part of the individual to only eat from what God has provided makes the act of consuming halal proper before the eyes of God.[38]

We now turn to the Qur'anic verses 5:1, 3, 4 and 5, in *al-Ma'ida*, which put forth more specific guidelines of exactly what not to eat, according to God's revelations to the

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[36] "li tuqbal ad-d'uā wa al'ibādā", from Ibn Kathīr. *Tafsīr al-Qurān al-Karīm*. (Amman, Jordan: Altafsir.com, 1366) 2:173.
[37] "wa kharuj al-bāghī wa al'ādil . . . ka alābaq wa al-makas" from *Tafsīr al Jalālayn,* 2:173.
[38] Qur'an, Tr. Yusuf Ali, 2:172-173.

Prophet Moḥammad.

> O ye who believe! fulfill (all) obligations. Lawful unto you (for food) are all four-footed animals, with the exceptions named: But animals of the chase are forbidden while ye are in the sacred precincts or in pilgrim garb: for Allah doth command according to His will and plan. Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which hath been invoked the name of other than Allah; that which hath been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by being gored to death; that which hath been (partly) eaten by a wild animal; unless ye are able to slaughter it (in due form); that which is sacrificed on stone (altars); (forbidden) also is the division (of meat) by raffling with arrows: that is impiety. This day have those who reject faith given up all hope of your religion: yet fear them not but fear Me. This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. But if any is forced by hunger, with no inclination to transgression, Allah is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. They ask thee what is lawful to them (as food). Say: lawful unto you are (all) things good and pure: and what ye have taught your trained hunting animals (to catch) in the manner directed to you by Allah: eat what they catch for you, but pronounce the name of Allah over it: and fear Allah; for Allah is swift in taking account. This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time,- when ye give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness, nor secret intrigues if any one rejects faith, fruitless is his work, and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good).[39]

The *tafsīr* of al-Jalālayn reiterates that avoiding pig flesh and blood are very important and part of the "bonds and covenants" forged between God and his believers.[40] God forgives if the rules are transgressed accidentally or in a situation that is out of the believer's control, but the rules remain clear. Consumption of grazing livestock is permitted, but consumption of animals killed in certain ways are forbidden: When hunted while in the state of *iḥram* or "purity", or when sacrificed on stone altars (a reference to pre-Islamic pagan sacrifice), an animal is forbidden. Any animal killed by strangling,

[39] Qur'an, Tr. Yusuf Ali. 5:1, 3-5.
[40] "al'ahūd baynkum wa bayn Allah" from *Tafsīr al Jalālayn, 5:1*.

violent blow, falling, or goring, or left over from a wild animal is forbidden, as well as anything sacrificed to an idol.[41]

The *tafasīr* draw a connection between food prohibitions and prohibitions on sacrificing animals to idols, and both prohibitions are connected with God's perfection of the Islamic religion. Following halal precepts relates, then, to the concept of *tawḥīd*, or of God being one, united and perfect, which is arguably the most important concept in the Muslim belief system. In Chapter Five, we will revisit this idea of how consuming halal connects Muslim believers to the rest of the Muslim community and reinforces their belonging to a position of submission to one united, true, and perfect God. al-Jalālayn attributes the despair of the nonbelievers to their exclusion from the perfect religion that God has prepared for the believers, and the global Muslim community, the *umma*, shares in the promises of God by living according to God's law. Consuming halal food is one of the most basic ways that Muslims reaffirm their belonging to a community of believers. Non-believers are subject to harsh punishment with respect to transgressing God's law, while believers are extended a wide amount of forgiveness, especially with respect to the food laws. If out of hunger, need, or desperation a believer must break one of the aforementioned food laws, and eat, for example, pork, blood, or (what is more likely) an animal slaughtered but not in the ẓabīḥa fashion, then God will be full of forgiveness.[42] Ibn Kathīr mentions how most of these laws are also in the "Torah," an interesting reference to how similar kosher and halal laws truly are.[43] Ibn Kathīr reiterates, though,

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[41] Qur'an, Tr. Yusuf Ali. 5:1, 3-5.

[42] *Tafsīr al Jalālayn, 5:1*, 3-5.

[43] The method of schechitah (kosher) and dhabihah (halal) slaughter are extremely similar. Schechitah slaughter lacks only the Muslim blessing that a Muslim "blesser" must utter upon cutting the animal's throat. Further butchering guidelines apply, but the differences are so slight that Muslims and Jews often eat kosher and halal food interchangeably.

that Muslim believers must actively follow the Qur'an, not the Torah. "*Aṣḥāb al-Qur'ān*," have a responsibility to not admonish each other except in reference to what has been laid out in the Qur'an.[44]

What seems most important here is intention. If a believer doesn't intend to sin then God is full of forgiveness. *al-Wāhidī's Asbāb al-Nuzūl* tells how these verses were revealed on a Friday[45] which coincided with the day of *Arafah* – a day of intentional and premeditated fasting.[46] The connection between intentionally eating of the good and lawful things and the intentionality of fasting reinforces the use of halal food as a tool of distinction between believers and nonbelievers. The mutual acceptance – people accepting God's blessings and goodness, and God accepting peoples' praise - is only made possible through the action of choosing, which modern Muslim consumers do on a daily basis.

Finally, we turn to the verses in Qur'an 6, in *al-An'ām*, which expound on this allowance afforded to believers to transgress food laws if it is absolutely necessary, and which reiterate how eating halal food is part of Muslims' unique identities.

> Eat not of (meats) on which Allah's name hath not been pronounced: That would be impiety. But the evil ones ever inspire their friends to contend with you if ye were to obey them, ye would indeed be Pagans. Say: "I find not in the message received by me by inspiration any (meat) forbidden to be eaten by one who wishes to eat it, unless it be dead meat, or blood poured forth, or the flesh of swine,- for it is an abomination - or, what is impious, (meat) on which a name has been invoked, other than Allah's". But (even so), if a person is forced by necessity, without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits,- thy Lord is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. For those who followed the Jewish Law, We forbade every (animal) with undivided hoof, and We forbade them that fat of the ox and the sheep, except what adheres to their backs or their entrails, or is mixed

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Lytton, *Kosher: Private Regulation in the Age of Industrial*, [11-12].

[44] *Tafsīr al-Qurān al-Karīm,* 5:1, 3-5.

[45] al-Wāhidī. *Kitāb asbāb al-nuzūl. (*Amman, Jordan: Altafsir.com, 1060), 5:5.

[46] Edward Campo, "Arafah," in Encyclopedia of Islam, ed. J. Gordon Melton. Facts on File Library of Religion and Mythology: Encyclopedia of World Religions: New York: Facts on File, 2009, [57-58].

up with a bone: this in recompense for their wilful disobedience: for We are true (in Our ordinances). [47]

Within the specific guidelines put forth in this verse, God's sovereignty over life and death and over His creation is reinforced. When forced by necessity, a believer can eat whatever is available, because God is forgiving and merciful. We find here a repetition, in different wording, of similar injunctions put forth in *al-Ma'ida*: the forbidden nature of blood or meat slaughtered when in an impure state, as well as meat from animals that were not slaughtered while pronouncing the name of God. Meat from animals with uncloven hooves, fat, and meat that connects to certain bones is also forbidden to Jews in particular. al-Jalālayn draws a specific line between *kuffār* , the "infidels," and those who eat of food which has not been blessed by the name of God. Keeping halal in the realm of food consumption is among the most basic and daily ways to reaffirm one's identity as a believer, as one of the fold. Inversely, the stakes are high, then, for people who eat of unlawful things.[48] Interestingly, al-Jalālayn mentions that those who believe that eating of the unlawful things is okay have fallen prey to *al-waswasa or* the diabolical whisperings of the devil. Deeming carrion lawful, specifically, is worthy of intense hatred according to al-Jalālayn, perhaps because it plays with the lines of life and death. Similar to ignoring the injunction to drain all of the blood of an animal upon its slaughtering prior to consumption, deeming carrion fit for consumption supposes that a human being can judge the line between life and death.[49] Because God's

[47] Qur'an, tr. Yusuf Ali, 6:121, 145-146.
[48] *Tafsīr al Jalālayn*, 6:121, 145-146.
[49] Interestingly, some of the criticism lobbed at halal slaughterhouses in America mentions that in the worst case scenario, dead animals are obtained from farms and processed as if they were live and healthy. Popular urban legend investigating site Snopes.com reports that halal plants are "notorious" for "putting already-dead animals in the human consumption line." If this is true, this food is firmly not to be considered halal.

name was not invoked before the animal's death, presumably God did not mediate the sacrifice or observe the transition between life and death, which makes carrion an unlawful food choice unless a believer is forced out of necessity. René Girard and Sigmund Freud's theories of religious ritual mention the importance of this sort of mediating force, to help push the ritual into the state of liminality that invokes sacred holiness even in everyday acts. al-Jalālayn continues in its *tafsīr* of verses 145 and 146 to relate the "insolence" of the Jews and God's subsequent punishments to their specific, strict food rules concerning specific tendons, bones, and pieces of fat.[50] God's specific injunctions levied on the Jews reiterates His divine power of using laws to differentiate people based only on what God himself deems as acceptable behavior

Along the same theme of food laws aligning with the divine power of distinguishing peoples, Ibn Kathīr's *tafsīr* emphasizes how Qur'anic guidelines about food separate the Muslim community from their ignorant non-Muslim counterparts, and God's name is the all-important barometer. In his *tafsīr* of 6:121, Ibn Kathīr draws a line connecting the consumption of carrion with being ignorant.[51] Ibn Kathīr says that only nonbelievers follow "corrupted opinions" that ignore pronouncing God's name before slaughter.[52] One of the most important parts of Ibn Kathīr's discussion of these verses is his handling of the different opinions on how to say God's name prior to slaughter. The controversy over this point must have been vibrant because Ibn Kathīr refers to different stances concerning this requirement and that *qad ikhtalafa al-a'imma fī hādhihi'l-*

"Halal Meat," Snopes, last modified February 2012, accessed May 3, 2014, http://www.snopes.com/politics/religion/halal.asp.

[50] "bisabab ẓulmihim" from *Tafsīr al Jalālayn*, 6:121, 145-146.

[51] *Tafsīr al-Qurān al-Karīm,* 6:121.

[52] Ibid.

mas'ala.[53] Ibn Kathīr uses the *ḥadīth* concerning hunting and slaughtering to show how the Prophet allowed the consumption of meat killed by hunting dogs, if those dogs were blessed before the slaughter.[54] This example underlines the importance of uttering "bismillah" in ẓabīḥa slaughter, because even if a slaughtering tool is not ideal - slaughtering with a sharp knife is always preferable to an arrow or the jaws of a dog – uttering "bismillah" can render the carcass halal. Ibn Kathīr supports the most lenient choice, that a trained hunting dog, blessed with God's name, can bring back game that is then to be considered halal.[55] The power of uttering God's name before slaughter takes precedence over the lesser details of the slaughtering process, and Ibn Kathīr promotes the view that would have made life simpler for Muslims depending on hunting dogs for survival in what was surely a tough environment. Again, God's power over the situation is reinforced through the uttering of His name.

God's sovereignty, then, is displayed in His jurisdiction over a Muslim's daily food choices. God separates His believers from the nonbelievers through His supremacy over every aspect of their lives. As al-Jalālayn emphasizes, His forgiveness is clear and evident to those who believe, while His wrath extends to those who transgress His will in any aspect of life. The most important connection in living a halal lifestyle, halal food consumption included, is the line drawn between a Muslim believer's intentions to worship God through their lifestyle, and God blessing those intentions and providing for His believers.

In summary, these Qur'anic verses contain some direct injunctions with respect to what God has provided and to what God has made lawful and unlawful, what He has

[53] Author's translation: "The imams' opinions differed over this issue."
[54] *Tafsīr al-Qurān al-Karīm,* 6:121, 145-146.
[55] *Tafsīr al-Qurān al-Karīm,* 6:121, 145-146.

"aḥalla" and " ḥarrama". Very little instruction is found in these verses concerning humane treatment toward animals, or about certification, even though treating animals well is a claim that eco-halal companies, which promise humanely treated and processed halal meat, make specifically, and that Muslim consumers are demanding more and more. Brands like Saffron Road and Crescent Foods directly state that treating animals well is a fundamental component of the halalness of a food, but this is based on their own interpretation of the Quran and Sunna. However, other Qur'anic verses enjoining moral living could be construed as supporting the humane treatment of animals, depending on an individual's own interpretation. For example, the Qur'an can be read to enjoin Muslims to treat animals with compassion in verse 6:38:

> There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you. Nothing have we omitted from the Book, and they (all) shall be gathered to their Lord in the end.[56]

This verse declares that all beings, animals and humans alike, form communities and belong to God, reinforcing both the importance of community structures as well as the importance of treating animals well. As such, some Muslims, like Zaid Kurdieh of eco-halal Norwich Meadows Farm, employ this verse as an imperative that directs Muslim behavior in an ethical way toward every part of creation, animals included. This verse and all the previously discussed verses from chapters 2, 5, and 6 of the Qur'an relate to a holistic view of an ethical Muslim lifestyle, and the verses are open-ended enough that readers might differ regarding their instruction to behave humanely toward animals.

[56] Qur'an, tr. Yusuf Ali, 6:38.

As we have mentioned, a growing issue for certification agencies is the demand among Muslims for better halal food that is verifiably sourced from humanely treated animals. If one moves from Qur'anic exegesis to exploration of the ḥadīth of the Prophet Mohammad, we find more evidence there than was found in Qur'an for an Islamic point of view on how to treat animals humanely. In exploring Muslim's and al-Bukhārī's collections of ḥadīth of the Prophet, we find that the early Muslim community was in fact instructed by the Prophet to treat animals humanely. This finding is supported by an examination of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, specifically the Books of Foods (Meals), Slaughtering and Hunting, Al-Adahi (Sacrifice Slaughtered on *Eid-al-Adha*), Drinks, and of Muslim's Ṣaḥīḥ, particularly the Books of Hunting and Slaughtering, Sacrifice, and Drinks. Within the ḥadīth we find specific, case-by-case examples of human activity as it relates to food. The ḥadīth in these sections show that the prophet Mohammad espoused certain types of humane treatment - slaughtering with an especially sharp knife so as to quicken pain and suffering for the animal, or forbidding beating on the face. In fact, the examples of humane treatment toward animals in the ḥadīth would have distinguished Muslims from other peoples living in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century A.D. Even today, the razor sharp knife is a distinguishing factor in ẓabīḥa slaughter that most certification agencies include as essential during their rounds of assessment and verification.

From the *Book of Meals* of Bukhārī, we find a series of detailed and anecdotal narrations of situations concerning meals the Prophet Moḥammad ate with his family and followers, with some discussion of the Prophet's attitudes toward what was best to eat and not to eat. Examples include the way in which the Prophet preferred gourd soup (No. 347 in chapter 37), or how the Prophet encouraged using the meat from sacrifices to feed

the poor (No. 349 in chapter 38). It is in these Prophetic anecdotes that we find the more nuanced facets of those aspects that became the backbone of Islamic food tradition and habits. This is not to say that every Muslim follows or references these traditions, but that it is a plausible source for the collection of norms that have formed food culture within Muslim communities worldwide, and for part of the background information that factors into consumer choices according to the Theory of Planned behavior.

Some actions by the Prophet help reveal how *tayyib*, in terms of treating an animal perfectly humanely, is a rather contemporary concept. With respect to how to treat animals prior to slaughter, the Prophet Mohammad expresses approval for some methods that could be deemed cruel today but that were likely not viewed as such during his lifetime. These include chasing a rabbit until it tires and then can be slaughtered according to the ẓabīḥa fashion (with a very sharp object until the blood gushes out, if a sharp knife is unavailable), whipping an animal while pursuing it during a hunt, and stepping on a live animal while slaughtering it.[57] But these examples of cruel behavior were presumably not considered to be cruel at the time, in the 7th century A.D., when survival was more of a test of one's wits and one's hunting skills than we could imagine today, in industrialized America. Considering how the Prophet recommended these practical means of obtaining food, and also considering their inclusion in the ḥadīth leads us to conclude that proponents of *tayyib* in halal meat production today are adding some modern ideas about animal welfare into their perspective.

Prominent in the ḥadīth, however, are some examples of humane animal treatment even by modern standards, such as the Prophet encouraging merciful behavior for

[57] Muḥammad ibn Ismaʿīl Bukhārī. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. al-Riyāḍ : Bayt al-Afkār al-Dawlīyah lil-Nashr, 1998, [397, 400, 444, and 472].

suffering animals, forbidding the tight tying of animals before killing them, and forbidding dismembering any limb of an animal while alive.[58] The rule against dismembering any limb of an animal while alive was also very important in Judaism, particularly in rural communities where cutting off just the lower leg of a sheep and keeping the animal alive so that the rest of the meat would keep for another day's use, had at one point been common practice.[59] In "Halal Food Production," food scientist Muḥammad Chaudry claims that practices like dismembering live animals or tightly tying animals prior to slaughter are abominable, but quotes a Saudi Arabian published book from the 1990s and not the Qur'an or the ḥadīth in his explanation for why.[60] This reliance on more contemporary sources reveals a disconnect between contemporary halal discourse and its textual Qur'anic and ḥadīth sources. One does wonder, why didn't Chaudry quote the ḥadīth that clearly record that the Prophet said not to dismember a live animal? The Prophet said that such an act is wrong, just as much as beating animals on the face, or branding on the face, is an abomination.[61] In Muslim's *Sahīh*, the call to treat animals humanely shines out even more clearly. In Muslim's *Book of Hunting and Slaughtering*, all Muslims are entreated to only slaughter "well" and with a sharp knife to "permit the animal to die in comfort".[62] In Muslim's Book of Sacrifice, killing young animals is forbidden, unless this represents a true hardship to a family.[63] A celebrated

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[58] Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in Vayikra (Leviticus),* Jerusalem, Israel: World Zionist Organization, 1980, [120].
[59] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, [409, 410].
[60] Mian N. Riaz and Muḥammad M. Chaudry, *Halal Food Production*, Washington, D.C.: CRC Press, 2004, [70].
[61] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, [422].
[62] Saḥīḥ Muslim. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim / li-Abī al-Ḥusayn Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī. Ma'a sharḥih al-kāfil al-ḥāfil Fatḥ al-Mulhim / li-Shabbīr Aḥmad al-Diyūbandī al-'Uthmānī. Karāchī : Maktabat al-Ḥijāzī, 1970, B20, [229].
[63] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, B4, [231].

ḥadīth from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* reveals the Prophet's mercy on a thirsty dog, and his belief that helping animals in need would lead to reward in heaven.[64] This is especially remarkably considering the general distaste throughout the ḥadīth for dogs who were not hunting hounds.[65] Another ḥadīth tells of the Prophet enjoining his wife Aisha to treat her camel gently:

> Hazrat A'ishah herself narrates: "I was riding a restive camel and turned it rather roughly. The Prophet (*sallallahu alaiyhi wa sallam*) said to me: 'It behooves you to treat the animals gently.'[66]

So overall, what emerges most strongly from these ḥadīth is an overall call to a sense of ownership, responsibility, and awareness about food, slaughtering, hunting, and consumption. Again, everything relates back to a believer's intention to be aware of what they are choosing to consume, and whether it is appropriate in the eyes of God. In Ṣaḥīh Muslim's Book of Food, it is stated that "the food for one is sufficient for two and the food for two is sufficient for four"[67] Muslim implies in this statement that humans often eat more than they need to, and that living a holy and conscientious life would entail eating a sufficient amount and perhaps sharing the rest. Though not related specifically to humane animal treatment, this idea of controlled eating conforms strongly to a measured and conscientious view of the environment and of consumption that could be understood to complement any contemporary, non-religious view on humane animal treatment.

While the concept of halal as a category that comprises ethical treatment of animals does seem to hail from the ḥadīth books on slaughter, hunting, and food, the demand from consumers to treat animals well - according to the contemporary definition

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[64] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī B43, [236].
[65] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, B5, [229].
[66] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, B4, [2593].
[67] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,B12, [240].

of eco-halal – is also driven by contemporary Muslim ideas of what is humane, virtuous, healthy, and good. Again, this echoes the multi-faceted nature of the Theory of Planned Behavior, which claims that consumers derive their choices from multiple influences. This can also be explained by the existence of centuries' worth of changing norms toward animal treatment, usually increasingly viewing animals as worthy of humane treatment. Again, this reinforces how contemporary demands for eco-halal food find a basis in the ḥadīth even while they are main derived from the contemporary milieu – other consumers, consumers' families, and market trends - that seeks out these types of food products. Collections of ḥadīth provide more details that help us understand what will be explored in Chapter Two of this thesis: the complexities and multiple facets of the global halal market. Every year that has passed since the Prophet Muḥammad's death offers another chance for a shift in interpretation of the Qur'anic laws, or in a different opinion formed about the hadith, which again places a lot of responsibility on the individual consumer to sort out what they themselves think of halal.

Ritual

We just explored the Qur'anic basis for Muslim followers to keep halal. At its base, slaughtering animals in the ẓabīḥa fashion, and the buying, selling, or consuming of halal food, is the human side of an offering between God and His believers. God will provide good, wholesome things to eat, and His followers must eat of it. Few things are off limits, and a Muslim's intent to eat of the good things and not the bad things is key. In the act of consumption, Muslim believers, according to anthropologist Victor Turner's theories on religious ritual, are "remaking" the halal tradition day by day. This power lies

in the hands of the consumer to personally determine what halal is for them. Individuals performing the halal ritual on their own are key in a contemporary context full of many stakeholders who seek to determine what halal is for the consumer, a point to be explored more deeply in the subsequent two chapters.

In Turner's useful and sometimes controversial theories, to be revisited more fully in chapter five, religious rituals comprise components he termed "liminality" and "communitas," which relate to the creation of sacred space.[68] Victor Turner commented on how religious rituals become "direct experience of the sacred, invisible, or supernatural," when they focus on death and its commemoration, which ẓabīḥa slaughter and halal food consumption certainly do.[69]

A state of liminality is a conscious departure from the profane and the mundane of daily life and the intentional entering of a sacred space. A component of liminality is its capacity to generate communitas, "a relational quality of full unmediated communication . . . with other individuals, which combines the qualities of lowliness, sacredness, homogeneity, and comradeship."[70] The creation of communitas – an active, shifting sense of entering a communal space – is the most important aspect of religious ritual, and each time a ritual is undertaken, that communal sense - the communitas– grows stronger. The halal ritual, then, extends beyond the point of ẓabīḥa slaughter (which is typically considered as the "liminal" moment in the halal ritual, due to the verbal blessing uttered at the moment of slaughter.) The blessing – *bismillah al rahman al raheem* – clearly

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[68] Simon Coleman and John Eade, eds. *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion,* London, England: Routledge, 2004, [114].
[69] Ellen Badone, ed., *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism,* Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004, [197].
[70] Victor Witter Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing, 1969, [132].

marks the sacred nature of a ritual slaughter conducted before the eyes of God in his very name. The blessing helps to separate the sacredness of the act from the profaneness of death, blood, violence, and of all the muck and stench of a slaughterhouse or farmyard. In consuming halal food, a Muslim believer's intention to live a halal lifestyle is laid bare before God and their belonging to the Muslim *umma* is reaffirmed and strengthened. Communitas, though it is a concept contested by some scholars, is a useful idea for this thesis since it represents the sharing of a common experience that occurs through individual decisions, i.e., the individual's decision to consume a halal food, whether that food hails from Australia, Malaysia, or Houston, Texas.[71] Communitas, whether it is existential, normative, or ideological as Turner classifies, equalizes people and puts all ritual participants on a shared plane of existence and experience, just as halal food unites the diverse global Muslim community.

As history moves forward and religious communities change, rituals shift slightly, retaining much of their tradition but also acquiring new significance and new facets. Chapter Two will explore a number of changes occurring in the field that appear to distance halal from its roots as a religious ritual, but that will never fully uproot it, and are instead contributing to halal's evolution in the 21st century.

[71] In *Reframing Pilgrimage*, Eva Evers Rosander clarifies how the "Turnerian idea of communitas has been challenged by Eade and Sallnow (1991), who argued that communitas was just one idealizing discourse about pilgrimage" (74).

Chapter 2: Halal as Commodity

Chapter one explored how preparing and consuming halal food according to the Qur'an and the ḥadīth should be relatively simple, rule-wise. Also, consumers can find a religious basis for much of what they seek in halal food. The Qur'an highlights the injunction to bless the animal with God's name prior to slaughter, as well as the requirement that meat is not sourced from pork, carrion, carnivores, or from any animal flesh still containing a trace of blood, or contaminated with alcohol. The animal needs to be slaughtered in the proper ẓabīḥa fashion, the rules for which derive not directly from Qur'anic injunction but from the years of discussions and developments in Islamic law following the initial divine revelations, recorded over 1400 years ago, as we covered in the last chapter. These simple guidelines, however, don't always correlate easily with the complex enormity of the contemporary global definition of halal food. Multiple negative factors, including profit-seeking companies and media scandals, can taint the word 'halal' in the public consciousness as it relates to food, heaving more responsibility on the consumer to determine what is halal for them.

Monetization and Globalization

At its base a ritual daily act of worship and means of providing nutrition to Muslims, halal has become a huge marketing category, highly monetized and expanding in breadth and scope. Despite this expansion and potential complications and confusion therein for consumers, halal has not departed from its role as a mediating and intensely personal ritual. As pointed out in Chapter One, a Muslim believer's intention to eat good

and pure things provided by God still remains the most important factor in determining what is and isn't halal. Halal, as a marketing category and as a ritual, is a term that has assumed numerous facets, and this chapter focuses on the more contentious aspects within that complexity.

Addressing the visible growth and change in the global halal market over the course of the past decade, anthropologist Johan Fischer wrote in 2011 that halal is being "transformed from an expression of esoteric forms of production, trade, and consumption to become part of a huge and expanding globalized market."[72] What was once a market niche targeted at discrete communities across the globe is now pushing at the edges of its boundaries and developing into a familiar product worldwide. Halal Focus, a Malaysian halal industry consultancy, views this transformation as a unique opportunity for increased global trade. According to Halal Focus:

> We are of the firm opinion that the Halal sector is set to become one of the most influential market forces in global trade, representing a paradigm shift that defines a new market based on religious belief and practice. Islam represents 25% of the world's population, and in addition to this 1.6 billion Muslim population base, Halal goods and services are proving to have an extensive potential crossover market appeal.[73]

America's halal market reflects a halal boom similar to the blossoming of the global halal market, The Islamic Food and Nutrition Council (IFANCA) recently announced that, "Halal foods comprise one of the fastest developing consumer markets in the United States of America. Halal consumers spent $15 billion on food items and related services in 2011," reflected by the increase in stores selling halal meat – 10

[72] Fischer, "Halal Frontier," [12].
[73] "About Us," Halal Focus, last modified 2014, accessed May 2, 2014, http://halalfocus.net/about/.

reported in the US in 1970 to well over 2300 as of 2012.[74] The American Muslim Consumer Consortium (AMCC) held conferences in 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012, directed at informing marketers and companies on how to reach Muslim consumers in America. Even the very creation of AMCC - founded in 2009 in Piscataway, New Jersey under the theme "scope trends and opportunities" in an "untapped market" - indicates a shift in the awareness among Muslim consumers and producers of the opportunities available in the halal market. The AMCC conference in 2012 opened under the theme: "The new face of Muslim consumers: socially conscious, innovative & engaged," a recognition of the swiftly changing face of the American halal market. Partnerships between the AMCC, IFANCA, and global consultancies like Halal Focus point to the existence of an international network of leaders in a global halal market, with big American players, all of whom actively seek to analyze, understand, and answer the needs and demands of Muslim consumers across the world.

The aforementioned organizations are only a few voices among many in this international network heralding the opening of the halal market to more and more economic opportunity. A Thomson Reuters report from 2013 on the State of the Global Islamic Economy indicates not only the vast growth the halal market expects to witness over the coming years, it also reveals some of the competition over which world region is declared its headquarters or capital. The report, supported financially by Dubai , dubbed the "Capital of the Islamic Economy," in the publication, says that the overall global halal market – comprising not just food but pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and personal care

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[74] "IFANCA 2012 White Paper: Halal Boosts US Economy & Exports," Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America, last modified June 22, 2012, accessed March 2, 2014, http://www.ifanca.org/cms/wpages/detail/502136ab-9fdc-4233-9b85-23b83239ea6a.

products – in 2013 was valued at USD 1.1 trillion. The market is expected to grow to USD 1.6 trillion by 2018.[75]

All of this expansion is pushing halal outside of the religious sphere and into tenuous legal and commercial realms. As timeless religious practices confront secular legal, social, and economic factors in the contemporary consumer context, it is left to the Muslim consumer to pick up the pieces and sort out their own parameters for halal. Certification and accreditation agencies, as well as halal industry thought leaders and community religious leaders, attempt to clarify these parameters for consumers, as will be explored in the following chapter. Nonetheless, I argue that an individual consumer's opinion and personal intention is of the highest importance in determining 'halalness.'

Consequences of Commodification and Globalization

With any niche expanding as swiftly as the global halal market, there are negative consequences. As an example of the murkier underbelly of global halal expansion, Dubai's sponsoring of the Thomson Reuter's report reveals some of the tug of war in affluent Muslim majority countries over who will be the world's most trusted global halal market leader, or who will be home to the world's most trusted certifying or accrediting body – a prize with a lot of money at stake. While Dubai declares itself the financial capital of the global halal market, Malaysia and the USA compete to claim ownership of the capital of halal food certification and accreditation. JAKIM - Malaysia's main certification agency - is known for what observers call "stringent" standards and long and detailed processes for companies seeking certification, while IFANCA in America, on

[75] Dinar Standard, comp., *State of the Global Islamic Economy: 2013*, ed. Thomson Reuters (Dubai, UAE: Thomson Reuters), [7], PDF.

par with JAKIM in terms of size and influence, also prides itself on its high standards (with not quite the same poor reputation for wait times!).[76]

International competition to become the undisputed global halal authority is only one of a number of varying ramifications of the expansion of halal food products into more and more grocery stores, as well as the expansion of the existence of halal food into cultures in which it never before had a presence. The expansion of both halal (and kosher) markets in America – reflected in an expanding range of different types of food products, and more trustworthy and attractive halal brands - also means that these niche markets are increasingly exposed to non-Muslim and non-Jewish consumers, yielding both positive and negative results. For example, the American Meat Institute, an organization with no religious affiliation, announced for the first time in 2006 to their stakeholders that the market for kosher and halal products was poised to grow exponentially.[77] Texas A&M University, a leading institution in the field of animal husbandry, offers a course in "Meat Science – Kosher and Halal." Some Muslim marketers and halal food retailers claim that increasing demand among consumers for humanely raised meat overlaps with similar demands from non-Muslim consumers, certainly a boon for Muslim proprietors. Madani Halal Slaughterhouse in Queens, NY, for example, reports that most of its consumers are not Muslim but instead consumers who want a more direct experience with the food they consume, and more oversight into

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[76] Shahanaaz Habibshaz, "Halal Cert a Passport to Success," The Star Online, last modified May 26, 2013, accessed April 8, 2014, http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2012/04/15/Halal-cert-a-passport-to-success/.

[77] Annual Meat Conference to Highlight the Growing Market for Kosher and Halal Products, last modified December 5, 2006, accessed May 5, 2014, http://www.fmi.org/news-room/news-archive/view/2006/12/05/annual-meat-conference-to-highlight-the-growing-market-for-kosher-and-halal-products#sthash.kNHaU3mb.dpuf.

the slaughtering process.[78] Demand for free-range and cruelty-free meat is growing among consumers of all religious leanings and companies who have learned to answer the demands stand to rake in profits.[79] Companies that offer humane solutions for slaughterhouses and farms, like Spirit of Humane, try to solve the "lack of humane slaughter facilities" in America and cater to religious and non-religious communities.[80] To develop their unique line of restraint equipment, Spirit of Humane consulted with Cornell food scientist Joe Regenstein and animal welfare expert Temple Grandin.[81] Both Regenstein and Grandin are well known within the animal husbandry industry in America, and though non-Muslims, both have commented on ways to make religious ritual slaughter more humane while retaining its sacred quality, just as they consult on how to make non-ritual slaughter processes more humane.

While this thesis focuses on America, it is helpful to consider how other non-Muslim majority countries are experiencing halal product expansion and industry growth. In countries like Canada and Japan, the tourism industry is learning to attract more Muslim tourists by offering halal food and tours.[82] Sheer growing numbers of Muslim believers in non-Muslim majority countries, too, means that more people need halal food products.

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[78] Ariel Kaminer, "The Main Course Had an Unhappy Face," *New York Times* (New York, NY), November 21, 2010, [MB1].
[79] Stephanie Strom, "Demand Grows for Hogs That Are Raised Humanely Outdoors," *New York Times* (New York, NY), January 20, 2014, [Page #], accessed March 6, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/21/business/demand-grows-for-hogs-that-are-raised-humanely.html?hpw&rref=business&_r=1.
[80] "Background on the Humane Slaughter Process," Spirit of Humane, last modified 2014, accessed April 6, 2014, http://www.spiritofhumane.com/background-on-the-humane-slaughter-process/.
[81] Joe Regenstein, "Halal and Kosher: The Muslim and Jewish Dietary Laws," video file, CornellCast, June 5, 2011, http://www.cornell.edu/video/playlist/halal-and-kosher-the-muslim-and-jewish-dietary-laws.
[82] Editorial Board, "Japanese Cuisine Goes Global," *New York Times* (New York, NY), December 9, 2013, accessed May 6, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/10/opinion/japanese-cuisine-goes-global.html?_r=0.

Along with this increase in halal products available in non-Muslim majority countries, however, is of course the possibility for negative reactions and breaches of consumer trust. In some non-Muslim majority countries, economic fear precludes celebration over a Muslim population increase, as is the case in unemployment-stricken France or Spain. Media and think-tank coverage on the political and cultural "islamicization" of Europe often mention halal food as a primary point of conflict between non-Muslims and Muslims.[83] Intriguingly, a few years ago there might have been a concern about the mere existence of halal food in mainstream markets. Now, some non-Muslim consumers in non-Muslim majority markets now request that non-halal meat is labeled as such, which is a true testament to the proliferation of halal food. Its existence in new markets is assumed. Muslim consumers, on the other hand, often fear the opposite: that a non-halal product will be labeled as halal and accidentally consumed. These opposing anxieties indicate how much trust consumers, Muslim or non-Muslim, must place in the hands of food producers, retailers, and restaurants to label halal, or non-halal, food correctly.

While the halal market grows, Muslim consumers do have cause for concern. Any area of swift growth and expansion is also an area of potential abuse or confusion. On the one hand, increased availability of quality halal meat is a phenomenon to be celebrated for American Muslims who have more food choices. On the other hand, where is the religious sanctity in the vast and swift expansion of a market that seeks to satisfy religious consumers and make money? Is such expansion worthy of applause or disdain? Are standards tracking along with production?

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[83] Soeren Kern, "The Islamization of France in 2012," Gatestone Institute, last modified January 2, 2013, accessed March 7, 2014, http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3523/islamization-of-france.

These anxieties that surround the expansion of the halal market are justified when one takes into consideration some of the odd and negative effects of the recent fascination with providing more and more halal products worldwide. There are many examples of over-certification, or food products labeled halal unnecessarily or redundantly. As Asma Ahad wrote in January 2014, Muslim consumption of halal foods isn't new at all but "what's new today is that food companies realize the huge market for halal products and are leveraging halal certification to gain market share."[84] Sometimes the lengths to which a business will go to obtain halal certification seem absurd. The Japanese whaling ship Nisshin Maru, for example, sought and obtained halal certification for its annual hunt. Oddly, the only hang-up in the certification process was the alcohol-based hand sanitizer used on board, and not the seemingly impossible process of slaughtering a whale in the ẓabīḥa fashion (the media coverage does not mention a blessing, sharp knives, or Muslims on board to perform the ritual sacrifice – necessary components of ẓabīḥa slaughter by most standards).[85] While company officials say that such a move is to give Japan's Muslims a "good protein source," it appears as obvious angling for more profit by adding a halal claim to a product to increase the chance of a Muslim purchasing it. Many similar examples abound of halal certified products that could easily be assumed to be halal but the label adds to the potential profit margin, to which a previously cited article from Malaysia attests.[86] Innocuous products with no meat-based ingredients -

[84] Asma Ahad, "Get to know the halal market," New Hope 360, last modified January 30, 2014, accessed February 4, 2014, http://newhope360.com/natural-products-expo-west-2014/get-know-halal-market.
[85] "Japanese Whaling Ship Gets Halal Certification," Sapa AFP, last modified January 22, 2014, accessed January 25, 2014, http://www.timeslive.co.za/scitech/2014/01/22/japanese-whaling-ship-gets-halal-certification.
[86] One retailer in Malaysia described the boon from the JAKIM certification as beneficial to sales, even on products that have no suspect ingredients: "Mohamed Zulfikar says that without the halal certification, sales will definitely be affected. Zulfikar says, "We don't use animal fat at all but there is a thing called customer stigma. So we have to get halal certification to give customers the confidence."

products that one would naturally assume to be halal - including crackers, milk, rice, can often be found with a halal certified stamp. For example “Halal Cream Crackers” can be purchased in bulk on Amazon.com.

Figure 2.1 : Certified halal cream crackers available on Amazon.com.

Another source of concern as the halal market expands worldwide is the discrimination and tension between Muslims and non-Muslims over disparate conceptions of violent or inhumane methods of slaughter. Europe’s Muslim population faces discrimination in many forms, and halal food in public spaces – restaurants, schools, airlines, and prisons – is a realm of potential friction due to the fact that some non-Muslim consumers believe that ẓabīḥa (and schechitah) slaughter methods are less humane. This is an example of how halal can become a piece of arsenal in Islamophobic discourse, which associates the bloodiness of ẓabīḥa slaughter with bloody acts of extremist terrorism. Even Joe Regenstein’s expert opinion on religious slaughter communicates that kosher and halal slaughter is only more ethical than stunning when stunning is done incorrectly.[87]

Habibshaz, "Halal Cert a Passport," The Star Online.

[87] Joe Regenstein, "Is Kosher Ethical?" (contribution to the "Proactive Approaches to Controversial Welfare and Ethical Concerns in Poultry Science" symposium conducted at World Congress Center, Atlanta, GA, January 23, 2007), [15], PDF.

In truth, the Muslim community is divided on the issue of humane animal treatment and the ethicality of some ẓabīḥa slaughterhouses. This division is reflected in the disparate approaches of Bilal Philips and Ziyad Mia … Salafi lecturer Bilal Philips' response to the "claims that Muslims are bloodthirsty" when they conduct ẓabīḥa slaughter is that ẓabīḥa, done correctly, imbues a violent but necessary act with divine meaning.[88] More importantly, Philips argues, whether slaughtered in a ẓabīḥa or non-ẓabīḥa fashion, the animal dies, made to bleed out for the benefit of a human who wants to eat the meat, and "irrational sentimentality" over the method of killing is nonsensical. According to Philips, using stun guns or bolt guns – common practice in the beef, goat, lamb, and pork industries – prior to slaughter is just as painful and inhumane as using a sharp knife. Another Muslim leader, however, Ziyad Mia, would disagree with Philips and views all animal slaughter as inhumane. On a recent episode of "Quran Speaks" said that industrial farming in America – still the source for the majority of animals slaughtered in the ẓabīḥa fashion – is not halal and admits to being a vegetarian because Muslims need to be agents of "social justice," seeking to ease the abominable suffering of farm animals in the production of most non eco-halal meat today.[89] Mia connects Michael Pollan's popular food advice from his 2011 book "Eat less, mostly plants," to the diet of the Prophet and his followers.[90] This intriguing link between the Prophet's actions and the views of a contemporary pop culture figure, Michael Pollan, is a perfect example of a

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[88] "Halal Animal Slaughter - Contemporary Issues - Bilal Philips," video file, YouTube, posted by Khalifahklothing, December 7, 2006, accessed February 11, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgeQFAbUD7Y.
[89] "Is Halal Meat Humane?," video file, YouTube, posted by Quran Speaks, January 23, 2014, accessed February 9, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sEJbuAdGmAw&list=UUaADzQEp9eYu9PTmJ28_-HQ&feature=share&index=2.
[90] "Is Halal Meat Humane?," video file.

Muslim thought leader combining traditional jurists' views with subjective, personal contemporary notions of what halal might mean.

The prevailing thought among Muslims who have considered this issue is that the slow bleeding out rendered by the severing of the carotid artery and jugular vein of the animal through proper ẓabīḥa slaughtering processes is that, in Philips' words, "the animal loses consciousness gradually and it's a very painless death. It is not a harsh and inhumane way of taking the life of the animal and is far superior to the electric shocks in the Western way." [91] Regardless, a dearth of scientific studies coupled with varying opinions from leaders like Philips and Mia on the issue of inhumanity in animal slaughter places the responsibility of choice firmly in each individual consumers' courts. There is simply a lot of information to sort through and as with any religious practice, each individual believer must arrive at the best conclusion for them personally, with respect to any issue.

Aside from the humaneness of ẓabīḥa slaughter, the wider issue of consumers motivated by religious precepts in a secular global market merits consideration. A study conducted at the Queensland University of Technology entitled "The Impact of Consumer Religiosity on Consumer Perceptions of Risk" concluded that some religiously motivated consumers express concern about what they are allowed to consume. In the researchers' words, "consumers may believe that [a product] will negatively affect their relationship with their God, and therefore experience increased psychological risk. Consumers may also believe that their use of banned products will negatively affect their image with other members of their immediate society, and therefore perceive increased

[91] "Halal Animal Slaughter - Contemporary," video file.

social risk."[92] The social aspect of consumption relates to the shared nature of influences in contemporary Muslim culture at work in the contemporary consumer context, in which consumers must filter through multiple influences to arrive at their opinions about their purchasing choices.

Marketing halal, then, is not as cut and dried and simple as marketing other popular categories, like organic or non-GMO, that have also gained global traction. The added factor of religion complicates the traditional marketing mix and means that added consideration of Islamic ethics is crucial. Few studies have addressed this relationship, but some thought leaders have expressed increased interest is supporting more studies like "Muslim Consumer Behavior: Emphasis on Ethics from an Islamic Perspective," published in the *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* in 2013. The authors of this journal article, who cite contemporary Islamic scholars like Muhammad 'Abdul Mun'im al-Jamal, Wahbah al-Zuhaili, and others, divide "ethical consumerism in Islam . . . into seven parts, [including] the priority of needs, preserving and keeping the maqasid ash-sha'riah [the purposes or aims of Islamic law], complying with the principles of halal and haram, quality consumption, celebrating individual and society maṣlaḥah [interest], and the practice of moderation."[93] The article stresses that it is difficult for Muslim consumers to fulfill these strictures without "planning in advance" with intention regarding what to purchase food-wise, underscoring once more the critical nature of proper intentions in contemporary Muslim life.[94] In the contemporary consumer context,

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[92] Sam Fullerton et al., "Summary Brief: The Impact of Consumer Religiosity on Consumer Perceptions of Risk" (paper presented at Society for Marketing Advances Conference, October 29, 2013), [2].
[93] Mohd Zaid Mustafar and Joni Tamkin Borhan, "Muslim Consumer Behavior: Emphasis on Ethics from an Islamic Perspective," *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* 18, no. 9 (2013): [1302].
[94] Ibid.

consumers need to be aware of what they prefer to buy based on their values and based on the information they carry around about appropriate halal food consumption.

Johan Fischer wrote in 2011 that "the proliferation of halal applies to what Lee (1993) from a sociological perspective has called the globalization of religious markets," a consequence of performing centuries-old religious tradition in a shifting and modernizing world. The consumption of food, particularly meat, is inherently spiritual, and animal slaughter is spiritual and sacred on a different and higher level, due to the letting of blood – a veritable life-giving fluid.[95] Fischer cites "seminal studies of food" by Lévi-Strauss (1968), Emile Durkheim (1995), and Mary Douglas (1972, 1975, 2004) in his book *The Halal Frontier* to substantiate his claim that "religion, on the one hand, and dietary understandings and practices, on the other hand, are inseparable forces shaping human cosmology."[96] Halal, then, is a crucial component of how Muslim believers today practice their faith in the modern world and involves complex and often negative components.

Furthermore, interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims, often overly politicized in the US, has involved halal food as fodder. As previously mentioned, some Islamophobic websites and thought leaders have analyzed the violence that some non-Muslims see in ritual slaughter as sinister evidence of an Islamic political takeover in non-Muslim majority countries. It seems more and more clear that halal cannot be private and insular in contemporary culture. Attention on halal food's place in US prison systems and factory farming in recent years results forces attention on the issue and can foster

[95] John Coveney, *Food, Morals and Meaning. The Pleasure and Anxiety of Eating* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).
[96] Fischer, "Halal Frontier," [13].

interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims.[97] When halal becomes a commodity, it can become political grounds for controversy.[98] As Johann Fischer points out in his book, "a number of landmark cases worldwide have revealed that governments wish to remain distant from "ethnic," "spiritual," "world," or "religious" food/cuisines, be it Ayurveda, Feng Shui, kosher, or halal." Religious food markets tend to fall "outside direct consumer protection and state regulation."[99] The next chapter will discuss those stakeholders who are directing the halal industry and taking up the charge to regulate it.

Understanding how halal consumption and ẓabīḥa slaughter fit into a contemporary context is a crucial step toward understanding the place of the individual consumer in a bewildering 'halal wild west' that marketers, retailers, certifiers, distributors, and consumers are now navigating as the halal market continues to expand. The role that certification agencies play in helping consumers sort out their own trust relationships with brands and retailers will be explored in the following chapter.

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[97] Zeke Campfield, "Demand for halal foods in Oklahoma prisons increasing,"*NewsOK* (Oklahoma City, OK), June 3, 2012, [Page #], accessed March 8, 2014, http://newsok.com/demand-for-halal-foods-in-oklahoma-prisons-increasing/article/3680976.
Isabel Schatzschneider, "Contemporary Animal Farming in Light of Islamic Principles - See more at: http://www.cilecenter.org/areas-of-research/food/essays/essays-details?articleID=41#sthash.L9gfN0jO.dpuf," Research Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics, last modified August 29, 2012, accessed March 13, 2014, http://www.cilecenter.org/areas-of-research/food/essays/essays-details?articleID=41.
Lizette Alvarez, "You Don't Have to Be Jewish to Love a Kosher Prison Meal,"*New York Times* (New York, NY), January 20, 2014, [Page #], accessed April 3, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/21/us/you-dont-have-to-be-jewish-to-love-a-kosher-prison-meal.html?_r=0.
[98] Shelina Janmohamed, "Opinion: The Politics of Halal," Halal Focus, last modified January 4, 2013, accessed February 3, 2014, http://halalfocus.net/opinion-the-politics-of-halal/.
[99] Fischer, "Halal Frontier," [14].

Chapter 3: Halal Certification: Filling the Gap

In international, Asian, and Middle Eastern grocery stores in America, hundreds of different halal labels grace food packaging, a testament to the number of companies and consumers invested in halal. In America, the components of the halal food industry - from the raising of livestock to the slaughtering, processing, distributing, marketing, and retail of halal meat products - are complex and subject to the rules of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as well as the demands of the Muslim community. Worldwide, a number of national organizations influence the chain of halal food production. In this chapter, my interviews with halal industry leaders support the existence of a paradox: As certification agencies proliferate, presumably to erase uncertainty about the 'halalness' of products in the market, more responsibility is levied on the individual consumer to be aware and informed about what halal means to them as consumers. While the halal industry grows larger and more complex - increasing the need for better, more verifiable standards - Muslim consumers' responsibility to know what they want from their halal food products, and to know what determines 'halalness' for them, increases.

In this chapter the roles of certification agencies – companies, or religious organizations that label halal food products – and accreditation agencies – groups that assess and monitor the work of certification agencies – are placed into their niche of the contemporary consumer context. The definitions of halal employed by these groups, and their standards for ẓabīḥa slaughter and processing, are extremely important to consumers who rely on halal labels to choose products. These certification and accreditation agencies also combine objective information – standards repeated by jurists century after

century – with subjective information – their own personal agency-wide standards for food production.

Marketers place labels on food products to add value to them and to increase the chance of purchase, not necessarily to lead consumers to better products. Halal labels, despite their connection to religious practice, fall under the same category of added value in many cases. Unverified halal labels - those lacking proof of added certification or accreditation – abound. While the word 'halal' may adorn properly manufactured and distributed food products, it is unfortunately difficult to determine 'halalness' without examining the chain of production that yielded the product. This examination is the task of third-party certifiers. Halal industry leaders and Muslim consumers in America are calling for better and more unified halal standards, which will help de-mystify the 'halalness' of halal-labeled products on grocery shelves.[100] The work these accreditation and certification agencies do to bridge the certification gap discussed in chapter one is commendable, but their duties and what consumers expect of them is still shifting and unsettled in 2014.

The development of Malaysia's halal industry serves as an example that reveals the difference between halal labeling, certification, and accreditation, as well as Malaysia's leadership in seeking to uncover "abuse relating to the use of the Halal logo."[101] Labeling is the most basic and least restricted of indications that a food is halal or not – all a manufacturer has to do is print the word "halal" on a food product and the chances of that product being purchased by a Muslim increase, a finding corroborated by

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[100] Susan Labadi, "http://itsahalallife.com/2013/04/09/halal-united-with-the-ifanca-international-halal-food-conference/," It's a Halal Life, last modified April 9, 2013, accessed May 3, 2014, http://itsahalallife.com/?s=halal+united+with+the+ifanca&submit=Search.

[101] Mustafa 'Afifi et al., "Consumer Protection of Halal Products in Malaysia,"*Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* 13 (2013): [22].

studies like "Halal Certification: Implication for Marketers in UAE."[102] Food labeling began to proliferate in the mid 1900s, usually to protect an industry's monopoly over a certain product, but now claims in food labels – all-natural, gluten-free, hormone free, for example – can be meaningless and are designed to increase the purchasing potential of that product.[103] Third-party certification is an added level of oversight into food labeling, to ensure that the protocol associated with a food claim is followed. The claims "fair trade" and "organic" cannot be used without proper certification, for example, whereas hormone-free, all-natural, low-fat, and gluten-free are among the many food labeling claims that do not require certification from a third-party – an agency independent of the food company or manufacturer.

According to IFANCA, global attention on halal certification dates back to the 1980s, when the Malaysian government established a "national Halal/Haram committee" under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister.[104] This committee was an early example of the hundreds of certification agencies that now exist to add that previously mentioned extra degree of oversight into the chain of production for halal food. Most nations worldwide have some form of halal certification agency, some more trustworthy than others. Malaysia still asserts itself in the global halal community as a prominent leader in halal certification, and is now home to the IHI – the International Halal Integrity alliance.

The IHI seeks to provide a high level of assurance on the halal food chain of production to the Muslim community. In its own words, the Malaysia-based organization

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[102] Shambavi Rajagopal et al., "Halal Certification: Implication for Marketers in UAE," *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 2, no. 2 (2011).
[103] Hemi Weingarten, "1862 – 2014: A Brief History of Food and Nutrition Labeling," Fooducate, last modified October 25, 2008, accessed March 8, 2014, http://blog.fooducate.com/2008/10/25/1862-2008-a-brief-history-of-food-and-nutrition-labeling/.
[104] Mohamed Sadek, MD, "Historical Perspective on Halal Certification," Eat Halal, last modified April 2, 2002, accessed February 5, 2014, http://www.eat-halal.com/historical-perspective-halal-certification/.

saw that the global halal industry was "devoid of a significant NGO presence or position that can provide accreditation to certification bodies."[105] The IHI was designed to be a "neutral platform" for the halal industry to communicate and network.

Accreditation boards, like the IHI, the World Halal Council, and the Association of Halal Certifiers among many others, seek to regulate halal certification agencies and the protocol, or standards and procedures, they follow to produce and oversee production of halal food. Accreditation organizations represent the highest level of oversight in the halal food production chain, but agreement on standards for certification agencies is shaky or nonexistent. A recent article about the Organization of Islamic Countries mentions the desire of the OIC to promote "global partnerships for the development of globally recognized halal food standards."[106] Similarly, a previously cited 2013 report on the International Halal Food Conference hosted by IFANCA highlighted the conference's theme of 'Unity' and the increased calls for a "unification of standards."[107]

Leaders in the halal certification industry worldwide have sought to establish certain production standards for years, and there is enduring concern surrounding the issue of proper certification. Recently, IFANCA, among the most trusted halal certification agencies in America and worldwide, published on their website that a fake

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[105] "Welcome to the IHI Alliance," IHI Alliance, last modified 2011, accessed May 10, 2014, http://www.ihialliance.org/home.php.
[106] "OIC Secretary General Calls for Increasing Global Partnerships for Development of Halal Food Standards," Saudi Press Agency, last modified December 16, 2013, accessed May 2, 2014, http://www.spa.gov.sa/details.php?id=1179433.
[107] Labadi, "http://itsahalallife.com/2013/04/09/halal-united-with-the-ifanca-international-halal-food-conference/," It's a Halal Life.

IFANCA label is being used by scammers to "defraud legitimate businesses."[108] *Halal Focus,* a Dubai-based Internet magazine, published the opinion of the Ethical Institute of Islamic Finance in January 2014 that:

> "… the key to legitimacy in the eyes of the Muslim consumer will be scholar-based standardization: 'Muslims do not want to continue doing the research needed to figure out whether their finances, food, and other goods are actually halal or merely halal in name only. They are ready for a legitimate, regulated, third-party standard.'"

In attempts to fill the vacuum of global certification standards, Dubai is one of many of what I call 'halal hubs' worldwide seeking to establish a definitive halal label that embodies agreed-upon global standards. The stakes are high for the development of such a label, since the potential monetary gain and publicity at stake is plentiful in the multi-billion dollar halal market. Accreditation is a sensitive subject in such a competitive environment, as the best of labels, certifiers, and accreditors presumably embody the highest religious standards that consumers seek, if their advertising claims are to be taken at face value. A quick scan through Halal Focus reveals the doubt certain communities hold with respect to halal certification in other countries. For example, in January 2014, the front page of the "farm to fork" section of the Halal Focus website featured articles entitled, "Thailand: Uncontrolled Growth of the Halal Food Sector," "Phillipines: Exporters Urged to Get Halal Certification," and "Indonesia: W. Java's

[108] On their website, www.ifanca.org, IFANCA published in 2014: "IFANCA has learned that scammers may be using a fake IFANCA certificate to defraud legitimate businesses. A fake certificate for poultry using the IFANCA name and bearing the names of individuals not associated with IFANCA has been brought to our attention. We caution business people to beware and to verify the authenticity of IFANCA halal certificates by contacting us directly at halal@ifanca.org."

Foods Still Need Halal Certification."[109] Nonetheless, despite this doubt, some stakeholders are recognizing that, in the words of IFANCA, " the former stance [in the halal industry] of protectionism and competition needs to be cast away in exchange for transparency, mutual support, and cooperation."[110] With more cooperation between halal certification agencies, halal food production companies, and halal certification accreditation groups, halal foods could be produced on a global scale according to better, clearer standards: a win for consumers, whose purchases drive the industry.

Interviews with Halal Industry Leaders

In the course of my interviews with eight American halal industry stakeholders, my interviewees highlighted the importance – and lack– of solid accreditation boards and certifiers. My interviewees included (A) one vice president of marketing of a prominent eco-halal brand, (B) one halal thought leader and founder of America's most popular halal lifestyle search engine, (C) one "halal relations manager" of a prominent Canadian halal brand, (D) one director of an award-winning PR firm dedicated to working with Muslims and Muslim-focused brands, (E) & (F) two executives at the American Halal Association, (G) an executive member of the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America, and (H), the Imam of a major Austin, TX mosque. I asked each interviewee through email three questions:

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[109] "Halal Integrity," Halal Focus, last modified 2014, accessed April 7, 2014, http://halalfocus.net/category/farm-to-fork-news/halal-integrity/.

[110] Labadi, "http://itsahalallife.com/2013/04/09/halal-united-with-the-ifanca-international-halal-food-conference/," It's a Halal Life.

1) From your perspective, or the perspective of your clients, what determines if food is authentically halal?

2) Who has the authority to decide if a food is certified halal, or to market a food as halal?

3) Do you have any additional comments about halal certification in America today?

Of course, interview responses varied, but resounding commonalities emerged.[111] Shared convictions among these stakeholders include:

1) **Halal certification is undergoing change in America and the years to come are a watershed moment for the global halal industry.**

Interviewee C pointed to the existence of "increasing numbers of halal conscious consumers" making it "obligatory for manufacturing companies to get their products halal certified." Interviewee D corroborated the image of heightened halal consciousness among American Muslim consumers today, writing that "Halal consumers are increasingly seeking out food and beverage products that are not only halal, but also natural, organic, non-GMO, . . . high-quality, natural, organic, chemical-free, humanely-raised and healthier." Interviewee B referred to a negative change in the American halal industry – "the growing issue of mistrust at all levels of the halal industry" and the existence of a crucial moment for the halal industry "to step up and give the halal consumer what they are demanding." Interviewee F wrote that "halal

[111] Entire answers are available in Appendix A.

certification is going through an overhauling massive effort," a claim that Interviewee G would likely agree with, in accordance with G's optimistic statement that "halal certification in America is opening new markets for food, pharmaceutical, personal care, and cosmetic product manufacturers."

Most interviewees shared the opinion that 2010s are a crucial time for halal certification, and that the coming years would witness new developments based on consumer demand. The second commonality in the stakeholders' response reflected the growing momentum toward standardization:

2) **There is no single set of halal certification standards, but that needs to change.**

Interviewee H explained to me that with respect to halal standards, "here are multiple opinions that [his] parishioners choose to follow," including: "One, since the Quran says meat of the people of the book is permissible, they will have everything non-pork. Two, they will only eat meat that is slaughtered in the name of God whether mechanically or manually. Or, three, they will only eat meat that is slaughtered manually in the name of God." Of course, this is the case just with respect to his parishioners. Many Muslims have widely varying opinions on what they consider to be "meat of the people of the book," and what the standards and guidelines are surroundings its consumption.

As Interviewee C put it, "there are thousands of certifying bodies around the globe issuing halal certificates but each one has its own criteria and standards. There is no accreditation body to control CBs and no unified halal standards to

follow." Interviewee B has noted, after 20 years of observing the American halal industry and watching it grow "10 fold," that the industry still lacks a "variety of clear, verifiable standards that meet the diverse needs of the consumer population." Interviewee A diplomatically allowed for the fact that:

> "certifiers who are regularly issuing certificates should have to answer to an accreditation body to keep them in line and there is no such body in the US today. Also, anyone can label as Halal and does not have to define what they mean."

Several interviewees mentioned existing momentum to enact a set of globally respected standards. Interviewee F wrote that:

> "some major American Halal Industry Stakeholders are committed to building the American Halal certification infrastructure by first developing the American Halal Standards and Schemes through the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and related Government agencies, then creating a National Halal Accreditation Board, and finally through third-party audits."

Interviewee E wrote that:

> "stakeholders are working with ANSI to qualify standards with which to then establish accreditation and legislation to prevent consumer fraud, develop a second-to-none series of global brands, and evolve a lucrative market for the US export market."

Interviewee C added, "with the growth of halal industry there are several initiatives to develop and agree on unified halal standards." Interviewee B pointed to the potential benefit of having no unified standards, because:

> "the fact that an authority is not technically required [to certify or accredit the certification of a halal food product] can be used as an advantage if we look at opening up the halal marketplace to transparent, crowd-sourced, and verifiable standards that fit a variety of requirements."

Interviewee B's image of the potential power of the consumer connects to the final commonality in the interviewee's responses:

3) The consumer holds the power in the halal chain of production.

Interviewee H told me that, "Since we are Sunnis, we do not have any authoritative body that tells us what is right and wrong. People choose on their own which opinion they want to follow or they will consult scholars they trust." Interviewee H also wrote that even religious scholars' opinions are "not binding" and Muslim consumers must rely on them and certification bodies based on "trust," because "their certification is not binding." Interviewee C wrote, "Halal certification is an important element but it comes after the consumer perception of the manufacturer" and that "halal consumers have every right to get products of their choice."

Interviewee B wrote that for online visitors to his website, Ẓabīḥa.com:

> "We do not get into the details about what [Islamic] principles are, mainly because of the difficulty of doing so and the lack of commonly accepted Halal standards. People take the idea of halal very seriously, so we are reluctant to say definitively if something is halal or not."

Interviewee B added:

> "Ideally, one does not need an authority to determine if something is halal. If a farmer slaughters his/her own meat and is able to convince the consumer that they followed a particular Halal slaughter practice, that person has as much authority as a government agency or NGO dedicated to regulating halal practices."

Interviewee D wrote that while her company:

> "highly encourages halal certification, from a third-party, well-respected certification agency . . . ultimately it is up to the individual consumers to determine what they are comfortable with. There are currently around 8 million Muslims in America, which means there is potential for around 8 million different interpretations of what "halal" means to them."

Interviewee G recognized the importance of relationships between certifiers and consumers, writing:

"it is the responsibility of every halal consumer to determine if a food is halal or not before consuming it. Often this is based on a halal certification from some halal certifying body . . . In many cases, consumers cannot perform all the necessary investigation to determine if a product is halal or not so they rely upon the certification of a halal certifying body that they trust."

Ultimately, though, Interviewee G says that:

"Consumers need to decide for themselves if food is halal or not. This is based on the understanding of the Islamic teachings derived from the Quran (the Divine Scripture of Islam), the Hadith (the teachings and explanations of Prophet Muhammad, Peace Be Upon Him), and the Islamic Scholars rulings or opinions."

Most interviewees recognized the importance of deriving halal certification from, as Interviewee E termed it, "an informed consensus relative to Shariah, animal husbandry, food science, and operational business realities." However, even the most informed and expert groups need to settle on a definition of what halal standards should be in 2014 and onward, or as Interviewee E said, "concur on the essentials in defining Halal."

In sum, this third point most clearly ties to the way in which consumers create their own intermediary definitions for halal by combining different sources of knowledge and information, mostly culled from their understanding of the Qur'an, ḥadīth, and various scholars/imams on whom they rely. There must also be trust from a consumer given to the producer, butcher, distributor, or restaurateur that the halal tenets they claim to follow are indeed followed, an issue of trust that is further delved into in the following chapter.

This final conclusion from my interviews highlights the theme of the power of the consumer to determine a definition for halal. Based on family tendencies, Qur'anic teaching, learned habit, and personal, religious, or academic research, opinions on different halal labels abound. As one might glean from the above survey responses, the preferences of empowered consumers are what will drive the change that halal certification is undergoing, pushing the conversation on standards into a consumer-driven space. If Muslim consumers want something specifically from their halal food products, it is time to speak up through purchasing the ones with labels they trust, since the halal stakeholders who form the global standards for halal certification and accreditation might analyze such information.

The American Halal Assocation encourages consumers to speak up about what they want from the American halal industry, because, "While there are leaders who have detailed plans for the start of a Halal Accreditation process, they have not received enough funding and there has not been greater vocal demand from American consumers. That is where the American Halal Association, ISNA, Imarat Consultants, Dinar

Standard, and the American Muslim Consumer Conference have a role to play in educating consumers and businesses that it is in their best interest to buy Halal, ask for Halal, and create more Halal products for the American and global market."[112] The American Halal Association, arguably the most powerful and reputable of all the organizations involved in moving the halal certification and standardization issue forward in America today, in concert with IFANCA, clearly recognizes the power of the Muslim consumer in making decisions about what they trust and what they want from the halal food industry today. As consumers speak up about what they want, helping to birth intriguing new developments like the first ever "whole-animal" gourmet halal butcher shop in downtown Manhattan that opened in 2014, or Whole Foods' most profitable frozen food brand in 2012, the IFANCA-certified Saffron Road, they drive the industry and reshape the notion of what halal means today.[113]

In conclusion, certification agencies and accreditation boards are moving toward establishing some shared standards in the years ahead, to the benefit of Muslim consumers who want to know exactly what they are buying and eating. These standards for ẓabīḥa slaughter and halal food production will be based not only on the opinions of jurists and scholars and Qur'anic knowledge on which halal food production has always been based, but will incorporate some degree of contemporary consumer demands as well. In this way, the contemporary consumer context affects the halal food production industry at the level of certification agency and accreditation agency as well, not just on the individual consumer level.

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112 "Why is it Hard to get Halal Food in America?," American Halal Association, last modified June 22, 2012, accessed January 25, 2014, http://americanhalalassociation.org/index.php/2012/06/22/why-is-it-hard-to-get-halal-food-in-america/.

113 Ashley Mason, "Halal butcher promises 'honest to God' burgers," CNN Money, last modified May 30, 2014, accessed June 1, 2014, http://money.cnn.com/2014/05/30/smallbusiness/halal-honest-chops-butcher/.

Chapter 4: Networks of Trust and Consumer Intention to Consume Halal

A quick search on Zabihah.com - the best search engine of its kind directing American Muslim consumers to local services and restaurants - unearths listings for five mosques, three Islamic schools, 23 markets, one business, 19 caterers, and 37 restaurants in the Austin, Texas area. The same search for the Houston, Texas area reveals 18 mosques, two Islamic schools, 15 markets, one business, 31 caterers, and no less than 83 restaurants. Dallas and San Antonio yield smaller numbers for each category, but certain establishments, like Fadi's Grill in Dallas or Moroccan Bites in San Antonio, have strong fan bases. This network of restaurants and services for Muslims in the major metropolitan areas across the Lone Star State indicates that the halal food scene in Texas is established and growing. This is the result of a legacy of a strong Muslim community throughout one of America's largest states, as well as the appeal of Middle Eastern and South Asian foods to non-Muslims in Texas as well. According to the Texas State Historical Association, "Texas has the eighth-largest Muslim population in the United States," mostly "concentrated in urban centers around the state" and reflected in the large Muslim Student Association chapters in Texas universities.[114] Like most Muslim communities, Texas' is diverse but connected through word-of-mouth recommendations for choices big

[114] Entire section from the *Handbook of Texas*: "In 1990 there were approximately 140,000 Muslims in Texas, which represented 0.7 percent of the state population and 2.8 of the total Muslim population in the United States. Most Muslims are concentrated in the urban centers of the state. Houston has some twenty-two Islamic centers and mosques and a Muslim population of 57,000, and Dallas has fifteen centers and 30,000 Muslims. The Muslim population is 4,000 in Fort Worth and 3,000 in Arlington. Austin and San Antonio each have 5,000, El Paso has 1,500, and there are small Muslim communities in Bryan-College Station, Corpus Christi, and Kingsville. Among the more prominent Islamic organizations in the state are the Muslim Students Association, the Islamic Society of North America, the Muslim Arab Youth Association, the Islamic Circle of North America, and the Al Quaran-Was-Sunnah Society."
Azhar S. Rauf and Ayman Hajjaar, "MUSLIMS," *Handbook of Texas Online*(http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/irmxh), accessed May 22, 2014. Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

(Islamic places of worship and education) and small (restaurants, grocers, and markets). Trust is a personal commodity in Texas' Muslim community, or *umma*, and most information about halal food and food products is obtained through simply asking.

During research trips conducted between December 2013 and May 2014, I visited most of the markets listed in the Austin and Houston, Texas networks on Zabihah.com. The main purpose of these visits was to verify which halal food companies and halal certifiers provide the available halal products in Texan Middle Eastern and Asian food stores. While I gained some useful insight into which brands are the most common and the most trustworthy, it was also very intriguing to speak to some consumers about how they trust certain brands, and how retailers trust certain distributors to provide authentically halal products.

Figures 4.1 & 4.2 : Halal food markets in Houston, Texas

Figures 4.3 & 4.4 : Guatemalan halal restaurant Senor Chicken and the popular Jerusalem Meats grocery, both in Houston, Texas

Prepared, packaged and frozen halal food brands like Midamar, Al-Safa, and Famous were the most highly sought after among the consumers I asked, in stores like Jerusalem Halal, Al Aqsa, and Al Nimer in Houston, TX, Madani and Sarah's in Austin, TX, and Naseem Market & Grill in Astoria, Queens, NY. Freshly processed meats were assumed to be halal, to which framed certificates from ISWA or local *madrasahs* – religious schools – or mosques testified in the butcher's section of the store. Processed food products for sale displayed either the word "halal" in English or Arabic, or "Slaughtered according to Islamic Law" on the packaging. Many uncertified brands like Al Baroody and Al Basha and Garo's display "halal" on the package but lack proof of third-party certification. Finding reputable logos or labels from certifiers like Halal Transactions of Omaha, ISNA, or IFANCA proved surprisingly difficult. It is possible that consumer-favored brands from companies like Midamar and Al-Safa are preferred because they tend to include an IFANCA crescent-M or a Halal Transactions of Omaha stamp, though verifying this claim is the subject of another research study. However, more often than not, consumers informed me that they trust the food is halal when they see the word "halal," certified or not. This choice to trust halal, even without proper

certification, was echoed by the owner of a popular Mediterranean market in Austin, who told me that if her distributors "stamp the box halal, we trust it, we receive it, then we use it." When I asked her if she ever doubts the quality of the fresh and frozen halal meat she receives at the restaurant, she shrugged her shoulders, lifted her eyes, and said "well, only God knows," and declared that if her distributors are good Muslims, they would never send her non-halal meat.

Figure 4.5: Uncertified Halal Labelling

These unofficial findings in food stores made more sense in light of relevant scholarship on contemporary patterns of consumption, which offer insight into group behavior, motivation, and intention. Sociologists Zygmunt Bauman, Robert Witt, and Icek Ajzen all wrote on various aspects of contemporary consumer culture. Bauman and Witt specifically focus on the background knowledge on a product that a consumer must have, if they wish to make purchasing decisions consistent with their values. According to sociologist Zygmunt Bauman in "The Authority of the Consumer," halal food companies and certifiers hold authority to declare a product to be halal because they

possess several key characteristics: "Expertise" regarding what is and isn't halal, "deference" from their subordinates (consumers) who trust that the offerings in a store run by Muslims will generally be halal, a tangible limit felt by the subordinates that crossing the line of authority would be "taboo," and an ability to impose a "meaning" or "definition" of halal.[115] It is doubtful to me that most consumers separate between the role of a halal food company, like Midamar foods, and a halal certifier, like IFANCA. Both such authorities hold the power to display the word "halal" on a food product, thus eliciting deference from the consumer, even though upon more consideration, the certifier should be given greater deference based on their higher standards than any halal food company.

In the contemporary consumption context, all four of Bauman's outlined factors – expertise, deference, upholding a taboo, and imposing a definition of halal - influence consumer's sense of trust in a food distributor or retailer, but we must also consider the role of the consumer's own knowledge. Since consumers often act in groups, and American Muslim consumers are no exception, looking at the influence of a cultural group on consumer behavior is helpful here. According to Robert Witt in "Group Influence on Consumer Brand Choice," major determinants of group influence include "dimensions of reference behavior," which include "knowledge . . . and affectivity."[116] Knowledge in the case of contemporary Muslim consumers purchasing halal food products relates to the amount of information they have acquired on the halal food production and certification processes. Affectivity relates to the emotions surrounding

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[115] Nicholas Abercrombie, *Authority of the Consumer*, ed. Russell Keat, Nigel Whiteley, and Nicholas Abercrombie (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), [47-48].
[116] Robert E. Witt, *Group Influence on Consumer Behavior*, Studies in Marketing 13 (Austin, TX: Bureau of Business Research, 1970), [17].

halal food that are elicited by the fact that *halal* is part of a religious tradition, as well as an identity marker and a familiar and traditional food staple and grocery item for many Muslim families. According to Witt, "knowledge of the existence of a referent," in this case halal certification signifying that a food product is halal, "is generally not a sufficient basis for an influence relationship," or in other words, for a purchase. However, "when knowledge of the standards, values, and attitudes of the referent is combined with knowledge of its [certification's] existence, then the potential influence relationship becomes stronger, the more nearly complete knowledge increasing the potential strength of the influence relationship (attributable to knowledge) to its maximum level."[117] In the end, Witt concludes that consumer "intention is thus assumed to be the immediate antecedent of behavior," which connects us back to the primacy of Muslim consumers' intentions covered in chapter one.[118]

In a manner that combines both Witt's and Baumant's views on the complexities of postmodern consumer behavior, Icek Ajzen understands this aspect of the importance of consumer intention most clearly. For instance, in his book *Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behavior,* Ajzen writes "there are so many factors affecting consumer behavior and choice that it is difficult to account for all of them."[119] I defer to the complex view of consumer choice provided in his theory of planned behavior, which tells us how consumers factor several motives into their choices.

The chain of command and responsibility that governs halal certification in Texas, as in any state, begins at the farm, where raising livestock does not differ considerably

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[117] Witt, *Group Influence on Consumer*, [17].
[118] Icek Ajzen, "Perceived Behavioral Control, Self-Efficacy, Locus of Control, and the Theory of Planned Behavior," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 32, no. 4 (2002): [665], PDF.
[119] Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein, *Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), [34].

between a halal farm and a non-halal farm.[120] Most farms raise livestock in the same way regardless of what sort of distributor, halal or non-halal, acquires the meat, and many distributors, like South Side Meats in Austin, Texas, provide animals to non-Muslim and Muslim purveyors and customers. The (non-Muslim) owner of South Side Meats assured me that he could provide me with halal meat if I desired, all I had to do was ask, and he knew a Muslim contact to call and speak to regarding the blessing necessary for the food to be considered halal. When Muslim consumers call South Side and ask for halal meats, it usually takes about a day for him to line up an appointment with a Muslim friend who performs the ẓabīḥa slaughter. A couple of animals – goats or lambs – are slaughtered at a time so as to maximize the benefit of having access to a Muslim slaughterer capable of uttering the necessary blessing and performing the actual slaughter. Many of the halal restaurants and shops I visited in the Southwest Houston neighborhood of Bellaire, where the Houston Muslim community is the most heavily concentrated, told me that their meat came from one particular distributor, for whom I was only given one name, Wesam. Similarly, in my visit to every halal shop and restaurant in the "Little Egypt" neighborhood in Astoria, Queens, NYC, I was assured by most of them that if the halal food did not arrive frozen and processed already, it arrived in large cuts in brown cardboard boxes with a halal stamp on the side, delivered by an individual named Hichem who delivered on Tuesdays. His farm was located near New Brunswick, New Jersey, I was told, though I was given no further details.

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[120] "Halal Vegetarianism," Islamic Concern, accessed April 10, 2014, http://www.islamicconcern.com/halalvegetarianism.asp.

Figures 4.6 & 4.7 : Halal market and halal restaurant in Astoria, Queens, NY

Such a lax environment in terms of information available on food product origins begs the question: What role does the government play? The US Department of Agriculture does not micromanage the distribution of halal meat, though it does play a role in halal certification by monitoring the safety of halal meat sold in the US The religious community must cooperate with the demands of the USDA in terms of food safety and cleanliness at plants, factories, and slaughterhouses. However, while most reputable halal certifiers in the US require that the USDA inspect the institution that is seeking halal certification, US government documents make clear that "the USDA monitors food health and safety rather than compliance with religious requirements."[121] USDA approval may be the crucial first step for an institution seeking certification for halal compliance, but most of the responsibility for ensuring the integrity of the halal operation in question falls on the religious organization involved in certification, and the

[121] Ken White, "Certified Halal in the USA," Bureau of International Information Programs, last modified July 2012, accessed April 27, 2014, http://photos.state.gov/libraries/amgov/133183/english/P_Certified_Halal_in_the_USA_English.pdf.

certifying body or agency itself. For example, the Islamic Society of the Washington Area (ISWA), one of the US' oldest halal certification organizations lists the as a first step in its "Requirements for Halal Certification," that "the facility must be a USDA certified one."[122] The certifying agency I saw listed most frequently on food products aside from IFANCA's signature crescent-M was the symbol of Halal Transactions of Omaha, a reputable certifier headquartered in Nebraska. According to Halal Transactions of Omaha, the USDA requires that a representative of an Islamic organization be present in order to certify that a product is in fact halal, and "violating this law may subject your company to heavy fines by the USDA for making false claims or unauthentic labeling," even though the USDA does not delve into the details of what authentic labeling requires, which they consider to be the role of the Islamic organization.[123]

Reputable and clean halal distributors and farms are proud to note their USDA compliance. For example, Texas Halal Meat, which provides a lot of the halal products distributed in the Houston area as well as Costco stores and H-E-B stores across the entire state of Texas, proudly displays its USDA compliance on its website alongside its proof of halal certification.[124]

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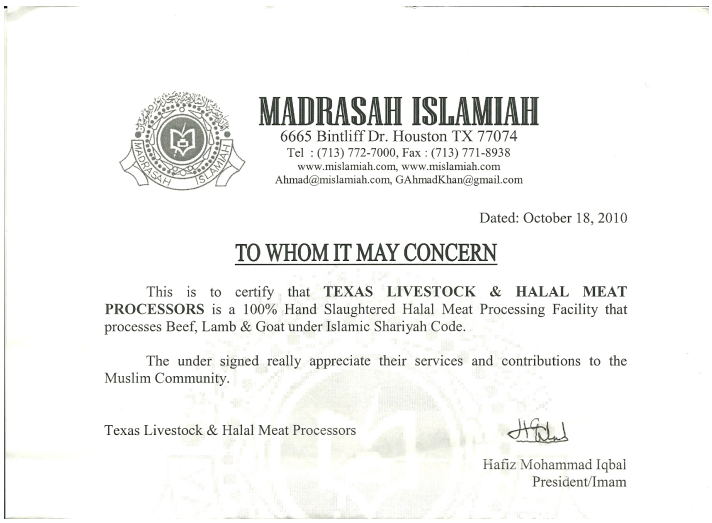
[122] ISWA, "Halal Certification Guidelines," ISWA Halal Certification Department, accessed May 3, 2014, http://www.ushalalcertification.com/guidelines.html.
[123] "Why Become Halal Certified," Halal Transactions of Omaha, last modified 2013, accessed March 9, 2014, http://halaltransactions.org/why-become-halal-certified/.
[124] Texas Halal, "Certificate," last modified October 2010, JPEG, http://texashalalmeat.com/images/certificate.jpg.



MADRASAH ISLAMIAH
6665 Bintliff Dr. Houston TX 77074
Tel : (713) 772-7000, Fax : (713) 771-8938
www.mislamiah.com, www.mislamiah.com
Ahmad@mislamiah.com, GAhmadKhan@gmail.com

Dated: October 18, 2010

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that **TEXAS LIVESTOCK & HALAL MEAT PROCESSORS** is a 100% Hand Slaughtered Halal Meat Processing Facility that processes Beef, Lamb & Goat under Islamic Shariyah Code.

The under signed really appreciate their services and contributions to the Muslim Community.

Texas Livestock & Halal Meat Processors

Hafiz Mohammad Iqbal
President/Imam

Figure 4.8: Texas Livestock & Halal Meat Processors Certification

The federal government defers, through the USDA, to halal certifying bodies to regulate halal definition and compliance. This deference testifies to a reality that an *Economist* article from 2013 alluded to with its opening sentence: "Keeping the government's nose out of anything with a religious whiff is one of America's founding principles."[125] This article asserts that Western "governments prefer to rely on private companies and market forces" to regulate kosher or halal products.[126] Also, the federal government defers to state governments, too, to maintain Halal food production laws. New Jersey was the first state to introduce its Halal Food Production Act in 2000. Michigan, Illinois, California, and Texas followed suit in the years following. According to Chaudry, author of "Halal Food Production," "at the federal level there are no comprehensive halal laws; however, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of the

[125] "Food and Religion: A Meaty Question," *The Economist*, February 9, 2013, accessed May 10, 2014, http://www.economist.com/news/international/21571419-who-should-regulate-kosher-and-halal-food-meaty-question http://www.economist.com/news/international/21571419-who-should-regulate-kosher-and-halal-food-meaty-question.
[126] Ibid.

USDA, has issued a directive for the labeling of halal products . . . The Federal Meat and Poultry Inspection does not certify the halal preparation of products, but rather accepts "halal" and similar statements, if the products are prepared under the supervision of an authorized Islamic organization. When "halal" and similar statements are used, plant management is responsible for making the identity of the Islamic organization available to inspection personnel."[127] In Texas specifically, the Texas Halal Law enacted in 2003 (HB 470) is still binding today, and requires that food labeled halal must be "prepared and served in conformity with Islamic religious requirements according to a recognized Islamic authority."[128] As official as this sounds, the identity of that recognized Islamic authority is open to a lot of flexibility because in the words of one blogger, "HB 470 leaves the question [of 'halalness'] open" to subjective interpretation on the part of the Islamic authority.[129] While it is unlikely to introduce a significant variety into the quality of halal food produced in Texas, such flexibility does mean that the standards for halal meat and ẓabīḥa slaughter could vary.

Halal Transactions of Omaha, one such Islamic authority with a role in certifying hundreds of halal meat products available in America, includes on its website a detailed list of certification requirements for processing plants, food service facilities, storage and transportation, packaging and labeling, slaughtering procedures and tools. Contributors to this list of certification requirements include members of Halal Food Authority in the UK, the Islamic Propagation Centre of Latin America in Brazil, the Majleis Ulama

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[127] Riaz and Chaudry, *Halal Food Production*, [26].
[128] A. HB 470, 2003 Leg. (Tex. 2003). Accessed May 9, 2014. http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=78R&Bill=HB470.
[129] Is Rick Perry Upholding Shariah Law in Texas? Halal Food Law HB470- 2003," Somervell County Salon, last modified August 20, 2011, accessed May 6, 2014, http://salon.glenrose.net/default.asp?view=plink&id=14147.

Indonesia, Halal Australia, IFANCA, Halal Certification Authority in Australia, the South African National Halal Authority, and the National Independent Halal Trust of South Africa.[130] This culturally and internationally diverse list is similar to the requirements for other prominent certifying agencies like IFANCA or ISWA, and is evidence for a push for international standardization. As my interview respondents from chapter three attested to, there are efforts at standardization, to which this list of diverse contributors attests, but there is no final and absolute list of standards to which all halal distributors, producers and retailers adhere in the US, let alone worldwide. As mentioned in the last chapter, the International Halal Integrity Alliance asserts that there is still need for a "neutral platform" for all halal industry stakeholders to follow. Specifically, IHI recently wrote on their website:

> The global Halal industry is devoid of a significant non-government organisation (NGO) presence or position that can provide accreditation to certification bodies. The main reason for this is due to the absence of a constructive platform for the industries to communicate and network. The absence of a credible reference centre for information has resulted in industries and consumers being bombarded with various interpretations of the meaning and application of Halal which often contradict each other. Initial feedback has indicated that there is a significant need for a neutral platform established based on studies carried out worldwide. It was against this backdrop that the IHI Alliance was formed.[131]

Certification by an Islamic organization and assurance from the USDA are not the only components that affect whether or not a distributor trusts in the integrity and authenticity of a node in the chain. Consumers themselves make their consumption decisions based on many factors, and with respect to the halal food market, the religious community and the federal community overseeing certification are a small part. Personal

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[130]"Halal Standards," Halal Transactions of Omaha, last modified 2013, accessed May 2, 2014, http://halaltransactions.org/halal-standards/.

[131] "Welcome to the IHI Alliance," IHI Alliance.

habits, family traditions and preference, and relationships of trust with particular purveyors factor heavily into the behavioral preferences and intentions we previously covered with respect to Ajzen's theory of planned behavior.

The most overwhelmingly frequent response I received when asking consumers about whether they trust the halal food offered in a restaurant or market to be authentic and why, was because the proprietor told them that it was halal, and that the verbal confirmation provided enough assurance for them. Consumers' intention to purchase halal food that was appropriate constituted the most important part of the network of trust in halal certification and consumption.

Trust between consumers and distributors and retailers is a crucial factor in the halal food market. Trusting that a product is certified halal according to the standards which one values is no small task. While certification agencies attempt to inform consumers that widely accepted and followed standards of production have been followed, the subjective component of the contemporary consumer context – the component that the consumers imagine and construct – must come straight from the consumers themselves.

Chapter 5 – Ritual and Unity in the Umma through Halal

Halal food represents an emotional connection – referred to as "affectivity," according to Witt's theory of consumer choice – to Islamic religious symbols. Ẓabīḥa slaughter is a normal process in Muslim communities, although most Muslim consumers do not witness it daily, just as non-Muslim consumers do not witness the process behind the scenes of a slaughterhouse. Similarly, the consumption of halal food products that hail from ẓabīḥa slaughter is a daily occurrence, so normal it can be forgotten as easily as the memory of what one ate for lunch the day before. But both phenomena – ẓabīḥa slaughter and halal food consumption – play crucial symbolic and tangible roles during *Eid al-Adḥa* celebrations. Described by Nina Jamil in her book "Food in Arab Culture," *Eid al-Adḥa* celebrates the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son Ishmael, and the faithfulness of God in providing a trapped ram as substitute. With "God's mercy and compassion" as the "source of it all, in ways fitting to the time and the community," *Eid al-Adḥa* is celebrated in diverse ways across the Muslim world, with customs designed to commemorate sacrifice, charity, and honor in a communal way. Every individual act of ẓabīḥa slaughter or halal food consumption is a component of the communal ritual that helps bind the Muslim community together.

In order to make meaningful connections between subjects as diverse as food consumption and food culture, on one hand, and the rich field of study of religious ritual, on the other, we need theories to help elucidate our analysis. As previewed in Chapter One, Victor Turner, Renée Girard, and Sigmund Freud developed landmark theories on religious ritual that are still debated among religious anthropologists. Their ideas help us

understand how the moment of ẓabīḥa slaughter is a moment of transference and change that evokes and channels meaning from the ritual act to the community observing and participating in the act. It is the variety of meanings of halal - which can be equated to small variances in the ritual practice - that lend strength to the ritual over time. Turner proposes that variance in ritual practice, even small, helps bolstering a ritual's significance, as the ritual itself is able to change over time as religious communities change.

Turner theorized that religious rituals across religions and cultures are not merely cathartic expressions of "some antecedent social reality," but instead actually "generate experiences that introduce innovations into social structure."[132] The radical idea that rituals generate new meaning for a societal group as a whole each time they are performed by individuals contradicts the previously popular structural-functional theory of religious ritual. Structural-functional theories of religious ritual, while focused on analyzing other aspects imply that rituals remain the same over generations and over years. Turner's complication of the theory is termed "anti-structure," and has spawned numerous re-iterations.[133] Anti-structure because it bucks objectivity and neat classification, the anti-structure theory on religious ritual explains how the same basic ritual – the act of ẓabīḥa slaughter – can assume different appearances based on varying details that change by culture and location. Different types of animals being slaughtered, the language and national identity of the participants, the location of the slaughter, the type of knife used, the dishes cooked and songs sung after the act on the occasion of *Eid al-Adḥa* are all examples of "experiences that introduce innovations into social structure,"

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[132] Alexander, Bobby C. *Victor Turner Revisited*. Atlanta, George: Scholars Press, 1991, [9].
[133] Ibid, [1].

making it impossible to categorize ẓabīḥaas one firm thing always and forever. Turner's arguments are based on the idea that ritual is one of the "principal means by which society reinforces . . . differentiations, since ritual reflects these social distinctions and in so doing is said to promote social order and cohesion."[134] Turner's ideas in part rely on ideas formulated by Durkheim on social cohesion through ritual and routine as the absolute "basis of social life."[135]

I propose that the diversity of types of celebration of *Eid al-Adha* highlighted in Nina Jamil's book exemplifies how structural-functional theories of religious ritual can be pointless, and how social cohesion across the enormous breadth of the Muslim *umma* is nearly impossible to achieve. Structural-functional theories of religious ritual view ritual as a restoration of the "status quo ante" and as the ultimate means to complete "social integration."[136] By rejecting this idea and embracing the changing nature of religion, of religious followers, and of the ẓabīḥa ritual, Turner "recognizes ritual's capacity to suspend social norms . . . and to transform the existing social structure" (29). There is a neat balance struck in religious rituals like halal consumption and ẓabīḥa slaughter that relies on a nostalgic preservation of antecedent social structures coupled with an incorporation of new social realities and groups into the old structure. Though different Muslim communities across the world participate in the same Islamic rituals, like ẓabīḥa, no one would try and argue that Muslim-majority Pakistan and Muslim-majority Morocco, for example, were striving toward international social cohesion by performing the exact same songs and dances, or cooking the same dishes during their *Eid al-Adha* celebrations. The diversity in practice for celebrations like *Eid al-Aḍha* across

[134] Ibid, [28].
[135] Ibid, [28].
[136] Ibid, [28].

the Muslim world reveals how the Muslim world remains unified on what matters (the tenets of sacrifice and charity celebrated in the course of the festivals), and flexible about the details that don't matter (the exact nature of those individual festivals).

As mentioned in Chapter One, according to Turner, religious rituals create liminality and communitas, which deliver to ritual participants a sense of sacred space.[137] Religious rituals become "direct experience of the sacred, invisible, or supernatural," because they channel emotional affect from previous historical events full of significance to the present day.[138] Ẓabīḥa slaughter evokes a special sort of atmosphere, which heightens considerably during *Eid al-Adha,* in which Muslims remember the shudder-worthy near-sacrifice of Ishmael at the hands of his father. The Eid also calls to mind God's grace in supplying another sacrificial victim, as well as always caring for the Muslim *umma* through providing daily food and provision (the "good things" mentioned in chapter one).

The Muslim community, diverse across cultures, languages, and habits, is somewhat united by a sense of communitas that is never the same from day to day. The halal ritual, then, extends beyond the point of ẓabīḥa slaughter, the "liminal" moment, due to the verbal blessing uttered at the moment of slaughter that transfers meaning to the meat and the act at hand. The ẓabīḥa slaughter is a moment of transference, and the blessing – *bismillah al rahman al raheem* – marks the sacred nature of a ritual slaughter conducted before the eyes of God in his very name. Always in Arabic, this blessing is recited across Muslim communities daily, even by those that are not Arabic speaking, in thousands of unique iterations. Communitas, though it has been contested by some

[137] Coleman, *Reframing Pilgrimage,* [114].
[138] Ellen Badone, ed., *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), [197]

scholars, is a useful concept since it represents the sharing of a common experience that occurs through individual decisions, i.e., the individual's decision to consume halal food, whether that food hails from Australia, Malaysia, or Houston, Texas. Communitas, whether it is existential, normative, or ideological as Turner classifies, equalizes people and puts all ritual participants on a shared plane of existence and experience, just as halal food unites the diverse global Muslim community.

Communitas is generated in instances of ritual that transform the banal into the sacred. Indeed, communitas, according to Turner, has an ability to "dissolve the norms that govern everyday social life . . . [which is] the reason it is universally perceived as 'sacred'."[139] Eating food, a necessary task usually undertaken multiple times a day, becomes a sacred act of worship through the use of the ẓabīḥa ritual slaughter process, which both transfers meaning to the food by rendering it edible for consumption in a spiritual sense, as well as connecting the slaughterer and the consumer to the rest of the Muslim community. Though there is uniqueness in each iteration and invocation of the ritual - as evidenced by Nina Jamil's text addressing just a small portion of the wide range of types of practices for *Eid al-Adḥa* - there is unity in how different worshippers celebrate same holiday commemorating the same event several thousand years ago. As Muhammad Abduh wrote, "it is not in human nature to be of one type or of one mind, except with respect to Divine wisdom. There is no place for difference of opinion on the essentialness of God, but there is room for variance in the science/ways by which society reaches that knowledge of Him."[140]

Ẓabīḥa then reflects how the *umma* affirms unity among a diverse people based

[139] Alexander, *Revisited*, [37].
[140] Abduh, *Risalat at-tawhīd*, [150].

on the one-ness of God. The blessing recited during ẓabīḥa slaughter - in the name of God most gracious most merciful - subtly invokes the idea of *tawhīd* and instills this sacred idea into the daily practices of the Muslim believer, even believers who don't speak or understand Arabic. The Arabic incantation that invites God to preside over the ritual is a commonality in the midst of different communities.

Other theorists have devised ideas that help highlight the transference of meaning that occurs during ẓabīḥa slaughter. René Girard, author of *Violence and the Sacred*, and Sigmund Freud, author of *Totem and Taboo*, have theorized that ritual slaughter is a controlled means of catharsis of the deeper emotions and ideas underlying religious sacrifices.

Both Girard and Freud regard "myths and rituals as recollections of original violent acts that must be controlled."[141] This again brings to mind how the violent act actively remembered in the process of ẓabīḥa slaughter and particularly during *Eid al-Aḍḥa* is the near-sacrifice of Ishmael at the hands of his father Abraham, commemorated in all Abrahamic religions. Girard is interested in the social role of symbolic religious violence in modern society.[142] Both Girard and Freud share interest in discovering why violence is so central to religion and some modern-day anthropologists view Girard as having followed Freud in writing about "the importance that religion holds in symbolically displacing feelings of hostility and violence."[143] Girard wrote in his landmark *Violence and the Sacred,* that "religion invariably strives to subdue violence, to keep it from running wild."[144] The ẓabīḥa ritual translates the horrifying nature of the

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[141] Juergensmeyer, Mark. *Violence and Sacred in the Modern World*. London: Frank Cass & Co, 1991, [2].
[142] Ibid, [1].
[143] Ibid, [2].
[144] Girard, René. *Violence and the Sacred*. Paris: Editions Bernard Grasse, 1972, [20].

original act of sacrifice – Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son – into a celebratory act that has developed into huge multi-day festivals across the Muslim world.

Girard is sometimes "congratulated for rescuing an interesting Freudian explanation for religious violence" from its connection to an imagined Oedipal complex.[145] Girard proposes the idea of "mimetic desire" that relates to how the "function of ritual" is to "purify violence, that is, to 'trick' violence into spending itself on victims whose death will provoke no reprisals."[146] In the ẓabīḥa ritual the violence is of course the specific slaughtering process dictated by the Qur'an and tradition – a sharp knife, a specific stroke that severs the jugular, and complete draining of blood. The victim is the unfortunate sheep, cow, goat, or bird, and the victim who escapes reprisal is the Muslim believer, understanding that human sin merits death. The difference between the animal and the human is "the opposition between the victim and the group . . . [a] primordial cultural difference."[147] The difference between a human sacrifice and an animal sacrifice in the midst of a sacred religious ritual is deep enough to render the ritual appropriate in the human mindset but close enough to invoke an eerie closeness to places an animal on the same functional level as a human. Functionally, that animal takes the place of the human who deserves death.

To put it differently, from "Girard's point of view, it is sacrifice that is basic, for it symbolically portrays a horrible and hidden desire. This is the longing to conquer and destroy something (or rather someone) intimately similar to one's self: one's rival. To conquer the rival one has to destroy it. But before one does, the rival will fight back, and thus will begin a hideous spiral of reprisals and counter violence. To prevent this, and the

[145] Juergensmeyer, *Violence,* [2].
[146] Ibid, [3].
[147] Juergensmeyer, *Violence*, [10].

rift in the social fabric that occurs when one's rivals are one's own friends and kinfolks, one seeks a sacrificial victim who can symbolically stand in for the rival and deflect the brunt of the violence. Thus in Girard's view, sacrifice is basic to human interaction because it is an expression of an even more basic human need: identity. One wants to understand one's self, and in order to do so one identifies with an idealized other, who becomes one's rival. The identification with one's rival and the craving for whatever the rival craves is what Girard calls 'mimetic desire', the desire to imitate. He regards it as a fundamental aspect of the human condition; mimetic desire in Girard's reckoning is virtually instinctual.

Freud advances a similar thesis in *Totem and Taboo*, although here the motor that drives the sacrificial vehicle is not mimetic desire but Oedipal aggression. Freud thought that human nature possessed a destructive instinct, and to keep it from tearing apart a family or tribe or civil society, its violence had to be visited upon a sacrificial foe. Freud concluded that this violent streak was not just destructive but self-destructive, a form of *thanatos*, a death wish. This desire to purify oneself through suicide was for him a sort of martyrdom, and in that sense one could say that Freud regarded martyrdom as the primary impulse. Violence aimed at another person and the sacrificial acts that are devised to contain it are the consequences.[148] As Freud wrote, "Insofar as sacrifice is a mechanism for helping to banish trans-communal violence, it plays an important social role."[149]

Applying Girard's and Freud's ideas to ẓabīḥa slaughter and its culmination, figuratively and literally, during *Eid al-Fitr*, requires considering the identity questions at

[148] Gay, Volney P. *Freud on Ritual*. Montana: Scholars Press, 1979, [105].
[149] Juergensmeyer, *Violence*, [1]

stake in any act of consumption. Ritual sacrifice on as small a scale as halal food consumption and ẓabīḥa slaughter, like any religious ritual, professes belonging to a cultural, religious group. Groups stay together through various subconscious means of advancing social cohesion, and Girard, Freud, and Turner's views portray a world in which people would resort to primordial behavior without the ordering force of religion in their lives. Islamic rituals invite God to play a part in managing, overseeing, supervising, and approving Muslims' daily lives. As covered in chapter two, rendering a meat product halal transforms a bloody carcass and a violent act into a controlled means of consumption and a meaningful gift of blood and flesh for human sustenance. Without the accouterments of the ritual – the *bismillah al rahman al raheem* incantation, the sharp knife, and the respect toward the living animal giving its life – the act risks being vicious, violent, unholy.

As previously stated, the contemporary consumer context surrounding halal food consumption entails a shifting landscape of social demands for food. Consumers want traditionally processed halal food, but some want food that is not just halal but is *tayyib* as well. Within that demand is a juxtaposition of fixed Islamic social traditions – the practice of ẓabīḥa slaughter – against modern consumer desires, which in the eco-halal niche have added more steps into the processing mix. These additional food processing and quality verification steps, as we learned from Turner, are like adding small iterations to the ritual ẓabīḥa practice, indeed to the religious ritual itself.

Consumption is truly all about individual stories belonging to indivudal consumers: What they want, like, dislike, and belong to. After all, according to Nicholas Abercrombie:

> Contemporary consumption in sum, is largely about meaning, and producers face a substantial task in trying to control the ascription of meaning. As with any authority context, there are struggles between subordinates and superordinates. Struggles between producer and consumer are not, therefore, only about what is produced and at what price, but also about meaning and the commodification of meaning. Producers try to commodify meaning, that is to try to make images and symbols into things that can be sold and bought. Consumers, on the other hand, try to give their own, new meanings to the commodities and services that they buy.[150]

As Muslim communities change and begin to demand products like eco-halal foods, that variance in their demands reinforces the ritual, perpetually refreshing it as something important and meaningful to contemporary Muslims, who have the power and flexibility to ask for what they want from halal food companies who produce the foods they purchase and consume.

[150] Abercrombie, *Authority of the Consumer*, [51].

Conclusion

Within the literature that focuses on the cultural and economic aspects of contemporary halal food production, halal is discussed as but one of a multitude of components of the modern Muslim lifestyle, worldwide. In the post-modern era, with its ever-improving technology and industry and with the rapidly changing consumption patterns that come with that, halal can become just another field of consumption. Different scholars in the book *Muslim Societies in the Age of Mass Consumption: Politics, Culture and Identity between the Local and the Global* explore contemporary Muslims' relationship with new global standards of consumption.[151] This book sheds light on the difficulty of retaining one's identity while shifting it to incorporate new components. Food's connection with group identity in general is the key component of the book *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity,* and choosing halal foods can be an example of the performance of a certain type of Muslim identity.[152]

Halal food consumption is a crucial component of the changing identity of local Muslim communities in America. Acts of consumption become acts of creating and sketching out identities, and shifting patterns of consumption partially reflect shifting identities within a community. When Muslim consumers demand eco-halal foods, for example, they are at once asserting the part of their own identities that values hygienic and humanely treated meat, as well as adding to the 21st century definition of halal. Zygmunt Bauman, quoted in chapter four, wrote that modern "acts of consumption can

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[151] Fischer, Johan. "Halal, Haram, or What? Creating Muslim Space in London." *Muslim Societies in the Age of Mass Consumption: Politics, Culture and Identity between the Local and the Global*, 2009, 3-22.
[152] Brown, Linda Keller, and Kay Mussell, eds. *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1984.

no longer be understood as the acquisition of material objects for their instrumental utility." In the context of food consumption, then, Bauman means to say that there are too many layers of potential meaning to consider in the course of a single act of consumption. Instead, claims Bauman, "What is being sold is not just the direct surface value of the [food] product itself, but its symbolic significance as a building block of a particular cohesive life-style."[153] Within the context of halal food consumption, Bauman's words highlight how the simple "surface" meaning of buying a food product can translate into a message with potent symbolism – about belonging to the Muslim community, and about to which level of "halalness" a consumer conforms.

Halal producers, retailers, and certifiers of course play a substantial role in helping consumers find the halal foods that they demand – eco-halal, certified, or otherwise – and in doing so are playing a role in how those consumers envision and think of halal food in personal ways.

All in all, those new meanings are communicated through Muslim consumer intentions, which are sourced from numerous objective and subjective influences (according to the Theory of Planned Behavior), and which God honors above action. Standardizing halal certification will help Muslim consumers across the globe accept the same baseline for what to expect from their halal food. However, much more importantly, through thoughtful purchasing (purchasing what they truly want and what reflects their values), Muslim consumers themselves become the primary influences on certification bodies, and in turn, the entire halal food industry.

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[153] Abercrombie, *Authority of the Consumer*, [5-6].

Appendix A – Interview Responses

Per IRB regulations, names of interviewees have been omitted, but their original responses are included below:

Interviewee A

1) From your perspective, or the perspective of your clients, what determines if food is authentically halal?

Our standards of what determines Halal are as follows from our Website: http://crescenthalal.com/index.php/our-process/feed-and-process/

Feed and Process

The Feed – Crescent chickens are fed an all natural, USDA certified 100% vegetarian diet of pure grains and soy, free of any animal by products and processed animal protein.

The Process – Crescent chickens are hand slaughtered individually according to Halal guidelines by Muslims with strict adherence to all required aspects including direction to Qiblah, accuracy and a longer bleed time. For further inquiry about the Halal certificate please contact Shar'i Ẓabīḥa Committee at 773.764.8274.

Why Choose Crescent?

- Humane handling
- Vegetarian Feed (free of any animal by products and processed animal protein)
- Cage-free roaming birds
- Individual Hand slaughtering
- Qiblah Direction
- Longer Bleed Time
- No Antibiotics
- No Hormones
- No Coloring Agents
- No Preservatives
- All Natural!

Knowing this, you can be confident in our Halal practices. We believe in the highest standards of quality including humane handling, longer bleed time to ensure wholesomeness "*Tayyib*", vegetarian feed so that the bird is Halal even before slaughtering.

2) Who has the authority to decide if a food is certified halal, or to market a food as halal?

An established Certifier with authentic standards based in Islamic Law and Teachings with a reputable track record. A Certifier who has trained staff and adherence to the highest agreed upon standards and one who also audits and is audited regularly.

3) Do you have any additional comments about halal certification in America today?

Certifiers who are regularly issuing certifictes should have to answer to an Accreditation Body to keep them in line and there is no such body in the US today. Also, anyone can label as Halal and does not have to define what they mean, as well as they are not regulated as strictly.

We (Crescent Foods) abide by our claims and have USDA onsite regularly as well as monitoring our claims on product labels, there is room for improvement in agreed upon standards.

The American Halal Association has been formed to address many of these issues and shortcomings in the Industry - visit: http://www.americanhalalassociation.org/

Interviewee B

1) From your perspective, or the perspective of your clients, what determines if food is authentically halal?

The definition that we use on zabīḥa.com is that a business offers one or more products that contains meat specifically slaughtered by Islamic principles. We do not get into the details about what those principles are, mainly because of the difficulty of doing so and the lack of commonly accepted Halal standards. People take the idea of halal very seriously, so we are reluctant to say definitively if something is halal or not. We prefer transparency, which means that to the extent that we can, we will display to the best of our knowledge any details about a halal product and the criteria by which that product was determined to be halal.

2) Who has the authority to decide if a food is certified halal, or to market a food as halal?

Ideally, one does not need an authority to determine if something is halal. If a farmer slaughters his/her own meat and is able to convince the consumer that they followed a

particular Halal slaughter practice, that person has as much authority as a government agency or NGO dedicated to regulating halal practices. We have noticed a growing problem of mistrust at all levels of the halal industry, which means that the consumer looks skeptically at claims of halal and is increasingly demanding accountability. The fact that an authority is not technically required can be used as an advantage if we look at opening up the halal marketplace to transparent, crowdsourced, and verifiable standards that fit a variety of requirements.

3) Do you have any additional comments about halal certification in America today?

I have observed the halal industry in America for the last 20 years, and I have seen very little progress in the quality of Halal authentication even as the market has grown nearly 10 fold. If those responsible for halal authentication do not step up and give the Halal consumer what they are demanding - a variety of clear, verifiable standards that meet the diverse needs of the consumer population - then they will look for other solutions.

Interviewee C

1) From your perspective, or the perspective of your clients, what determines if food is authentically halal?

First and very important factor to determine halal is overall reputation of manufacturer. Halal certification is also an important element but it come after the consumer perception of manufacturer. There are hundreds of certifying bodies in North America but only few have the resources and expertise to inspect and certify halal.
With increasing number of halal conscious customers it is becoming obligatory for large manufacturing companies to get their products certified by a reputed halal certifying body.

2) Who has the authority to decide if a food is certified halal, or to market a food as halal?

There is no such body. General population mostly depends on their local religious leader (Imam) and follows his advice. There are thousands of certifying bodies around the globe issuing halal certificates but each one has its own criteria and standards. There is no accreditation body to control CBs and no unified halal standards to follow. Each organization gets its strength and acceptability from public perception.
With the growth of halal industry there are several initiatives to develop and agree on unified halal standards. The most serious effort is by Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC is a body of 57 Muslim governments) which is in process to develop unified halal standards through 'The Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic countries' and International Islamic Fiqh Academy.

3) Do you have any additional comments about halal certification in America today?

Halal consumers are part of this society and they have every right to get products of their choice. It is the responsibility of local governments to have legislation and by-laws to control and accredit CBs based on set criteria.

Interviewee D

1) From your perspective, or the perspective of your clients, what determines if food is authentically halal?

We highly encourage Halal certification for our clients. Earning a certification from a third-party, credible, well respected certification agency is also very important.

2) Who has the authority to decide if a food is certified halal, or to market a food as halal?

We trust only the most credible Halal certification experts for this, however ultimately it is up to individual consumers to decide what they are comfortable with. There are currently around 8 million Muslims in America, which means there is potential for around 8 million different interpretations of what "Halal" means to them.

3) Do you have any additional comments about halal certification in America today?

Yes; several below.

We are seeing more consumer demand for high-quality, natural, organic, chemical-free, humanely-raised and healthier food options. Halal consumers too are increasingly seeking out food and beverage products that are not only halal, but also natural, organic, non-GMO, etc. We especially see concerns like these (chemical-free) among Muslim moms. In short, Halal certification alone is not enough to win over many American Muslim consumers.

There are a variety of challenges for Halal brands — from production transparency, product quality, brand positioning and branding, to Halal certification and relevant retail placement. Working with a credible, third-party Halal certifier that consumers know and trust in your key market is one of the challenges we see most often. Also appropriate retail placement is something we're currently seeing brands struggle with. While some Muslim communities are happy to purchase Halal products at mainstream supermarkets (that also carry many non-Halal products), some insist on buying products like meat at Halal-only butcheries. We see this more often with conservative Muslim communities outside of the USA.

There is a cross-over between natural & Halal foods consumers. Both are looking for pure, ethical & healthier choices, which Halal products have the ability to deliver. The

values of Halal consumers are not all that different from other conscious-consumer groups in America.

Interviewee E

I'm very pleased that you've chosen this topic to research, and I do hope that your work gathers much traction in our work to qualify American products for the global Halal market.
Regarding the first Q: As Halal is understood to be "Lawful," any consumables contaminated with alcohol or pork and its by-products would be precluded from Halal.

Regarding Q2: The authority to decide should be from an informed consensus relative to shariah, animal husbandry, food science, and operational business realities. Many avenues of potential contamination, animal abuse, and processing with properties that may degrade human health, safety, and foil quality assurance must be monitored.

Q3: As Mr. Adam outlined, stakeholders are working with ANSI to qualify standards with which to then establish accreditation and legislation to prevent consumer fraud, develop a second-to-none series of global brands, and evolve a lucrative market for the US export market.

Subsequent email for clarifications:
When I think of Stakeholders, I include all those who provide and consume from the Halal supply chain. That would be farmers, herders, certifying agencies, large and medium sized manufacturers and processors, distributors, vendors, religious scholars, and consumers. Consumers are Muslim and non-Muslim people who want surety that the products are clean and accurately labeled.

For ANSI to approve the development of standards, consensus groups need to meet to concur on the essentials in defining Halal. The groups are to be comprised of such stakeholders.

Interviewee F

1) From your perspective, or the perspective of your clients, what determines if food is authentically halal?

Brand Recognition and legal claims on government controlled labeling

2) Who has the authority to decide if a food is certified halal, or to market a food as halal?

The USDA mandates the minimum to claim Halal. Therefore, it is so easy for anyone to claim. Please refer to USDA directives on the Halal labeling requirement

3) Do you have any additional comments about halal certification in America today?

Halal certification is going through an overhauling massive effort. In brief, some major American Halal Industry Stakeholders are committed to building the American Halal certification infrastructure by; 1- Developing the American Halal Standards and Schemes through ANSI and related Government agencies 2- Creating a National Halal Accreditation Board 3- Third party audits

Interviewee G

1) From your perspective, or the perspective of your clients, what determines if food is authentically halal?

Consumers need to decide for themselves if food is halal or not. This is based on the understanding of the Islamic teachings derived from the Quran (the Divine Scripture of Islam), the Hadith (the teachings and explanations of Prophet Muhammad, Peace Be Upon Him), and the Islamic Scholars rulings or opinions. As a halal certifier, we have a religious advisory council to guide us on the Islamic understanding and a staff of food scientists to merge that with the science and industry practices to determine if a product is halal or not. The basics for halal dietary guidelines are that consumables should not contain any pork or alcoholic beverage ingredients and only specific species of meat and poultry must be prepared according to Islamic requirements. There are some other requirements but these are the most obvious ones. In many cases,consumers cannot perform all the necessary investigation to determine if a product is halal or not so they rely upon the certification of a halal certifying body that they trust.

2) Who has the authority to decide if a food is certified halal, or to market a food as halal?

It is the responsibility of every halal consumer to determine if a food is halal or not before consuming it. Often this is based on a halal certification from some halal certifying body. While anyone or any body maycertify a product, consumers will only accept a halal certification from a body they know and trust. In some cases, food producers certify their own production. Such products are not really halal certified but simply labeled as halal and may not be universally accepted by consumers. Also, some states have passed consumer protection laws requiring anyone labeling or selling a product as halal to have a stated basis upon which they believe the product to be halal. There is currently no global authority that decides what food products are halal or who can provide halal certification.

3) Do you have any additional comments about halal certification in America today?

Halal certification in America is opening new markets for food, pharmaceutical, personal care, and cosmetic product manufacturers. There are 1.6 billion Muslims in the world requiring halal products and many non-Muslims also perceive halal certified products to have additional layer of checking. The industry has recognized this and is embracing halal certification. Independent third party halal certification by qualified bodies provides additional scrutiny of production and is considered a quality enhancement to normal food production. The industry began getting halal certification to be able to export the products to Muslim importing countries but is now realizing there is a domestic market for halal certified products and we expect to see more and more halal certified products available locally.

Interviewee H

1) From your perspective, or the perspective of your clients, what determines if food is authentically halal?

Since we are Sunnis, we do not have any authoritative body that tells us what is right and wrong. People choose on their own which opinion they want to follow or they will consult scholars they trust.

There are multiple opinions that my parishioners choose to follow.:
1. Since the Quran says meat of the people of the book is permissible, they will have everything non-pork.
2. They will only eat meat that is slaughtered in the name of God whether mechanically or manually
3. They will only eat meat that is slaughtered manually in the name of God.

2) Who has the authority to decide if a food is certified halal, or to market a food as halal?

Scholars in the religion though their opinions are not binding. It is based more on trust. There are certain bodies like Ifanca, HFSAA, and others that provide certification. However their certification is not binding.

3) Do you have any additional comments about halal certification in America today?

http://halaladvocates.net/site/hfsaa/about-hfsaa/
http://www.ifanca.org/
http://www.ushalalcertification.com/
http://www.isnahalal.ca/
http://hma.jucanada.org/

Glossary

Accreditation – Verifying that a certification agency follows the processes it lays out as its halal production standards.

Certification – Labeling a food product as halal after verifying that the food product satisfies the requirements of the certification agency.

Certification Gap – The mental bridge of trust that a consumer uses mentally to purchase a halal meat product. Crossing the certification gap, through the help of certification and accreditation agencies that advertise a product as halal, is an act of choosing to trust that what they are consuming is indeed halal.

Halal - According to sociologist Johan Fischer, whose view corroborates with most contemporary definitions, "halal in Arabic means "good" or "permissible," and can be applied to a wide range of products and practices that are part of a Muslim lifestyle." The word halal, however, is most commonly used to apply to food in this thesis.

Halalness – The degree to which a meat product is considered halal. Viewed in this thesis as a largely personal metric, combining objective information about the meat product (was the meat product produced based on the ẓabīḥa guidelines laid out in the Qur'an and the ḥadīth?), and subjective information about the meat product (does the meat product satisfy the quality limits determined by the individual?).

Standardization – Efforts to unify and provide commonalities between the rules and guidelines employed by halal certification agencies.

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