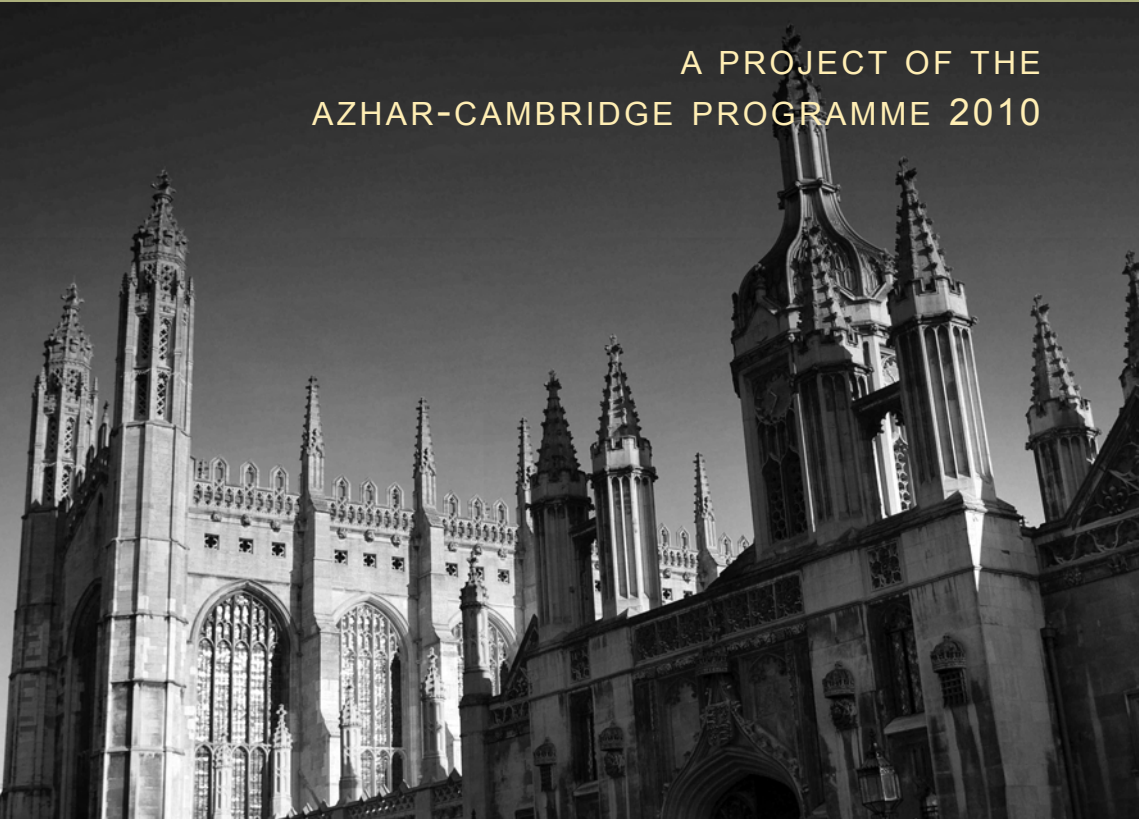


CERTIFICATION OF HALAL MEAT IN THE UK

A PROJECT OF THE
AZHAR-CAMBRIDGE PROGRAMME 2010



RAMON HARVEY



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The Muslim community never controlled its halal market from a certification perspective until very late on, and by that time the octopus, the tentacles of the octopus had spread wide, and therefore trying to gather them and trying to get them under control is near impossible. Shaykh Yunus Dudhwala, Chairman of the Halal Monitoring Committee, 2010



Preface



The Azhar-Cambridge Programme (2010) is an education project for graduates of Islamic studies in Islamic colleges/Dar al-Ulums who already have some detailed knowledge of the core Islamic sciences. Funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Communities and Local Government, and led by the Centre of Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge, this programme focuses on enhancing the knowledge base of the students, providing an introduction to some of the related disciplines of a pure Islamic studies curriculum and applying critical thinking to equip the students to operate effectively in complex modern situations.

Students on the Azhar-Cambridge Programme, which Ramon 'Ibrahim' Harvey attended, were asked to produce a community-based and action-oriented report as part of the requirements for graduation. This report provides an example of the kind of work the students conducted. It deals with an issue of great importance to Muslims in the UK and, by implication, to other Muslim communities in non-majority Muslim countries. The report touches on the topic of halal meat from a variety of perspectives, but it privileges the sociology of halal practice by highlighting the different factors involved in certification. The first part of the report provides an analysis of the issues involved in certification. The second provides a full record of the interviews conducted in the fieldwork. They are included here as a documentary contribution for the benefit of other researchers who may be interested in the topic.

I commend this report to you.

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The views and recommendations expressed in this report are my own and should not be taken as representing the views of the Centre of Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge.

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INTRODUCTION

The question of halal¹ (permissible) food, and ritually slaughtered meat in particular, is an extremely important one for any Muslim community, as the injunction to eat that which is halal (and indeed *tayyib*, or wholesome) is a fundamental aspect of the Islamic way of life decreed within the Qur'an.² The UK, as both a Muslim-minority and highly industrialised country, presents challenges to those committed to eating only halal meat. A number of issues cluster around the presence of the dominant meat industry within the UK, which is engaged in producing non-halal meat for consumption. Its modern rationalised methods of slaughter have had a formative impact on the smaller halal industry, to the extent that concerns have been raised about the religious validity of some of the practices that have been introduced by the latter in the name of expediency. The dynamics of the market have also led to the alleged sale of non-halal meat by unscrupulous halal butchers. This feeds into another issue, the UK's lack of a universal and authoritative standard or legal definition of halal.

With no defined criteria in place, it can be very difficult for a Muslim consumer to know the provenance of the meat that they buy and the basis by which it is deemed to be halal. At the same time, there is arguably little to stop any butcher, restaurant or takeaway claiming that their meat is halal, without fear of legally enforceable consequences if this turns out to be a dubious or baseless assertion. Masood Khawaja, president of the

Halal Food Authority (HFA), argues that government-controlled Trading Standards are able to act against shops that sell meat with a provenance not matching that stated on their 'halal' certificate, if they have one. Similarly, they may breach Trading Standards if they advertise themselves as halal, but patently sell meat from non-halal slaughterhouses.³ The problem rests with the question of who is setting the standard by which slaughterhouses must operate to meet the criteria of halal – an area largely outside of the remit of UK law.

In response to this situation, a number of Muslim organisations have developed in the UK and have tried to set some sort of voluntary standard within the industry, the biggest being the HFA (Halal Food Authority) and HMC (Halal Monitoring Committee). Many ordinary Muslims, however, remain confused or ignorant about the state of the UK halal meat industry, the reasons for the establishment of these bodies and the differences between them. An important instance of this has been a quite severe divergence over the acceptability of technological innovations being used within the industry, which have become a flashpoint sparking controversy and debate. At the heart of this divergence are the dual questions of stunning animals before slaughter and the use of mechanical slaughter in the case of poultry. Stunning, the rendering of an animal senseless before it is slaughtered, is usually a mandatory procedure under British law. Jewish and Muslim religious slaughter has always been excluded from this legislation, but nevertheless some halal slaughterhouses have adopted it for reasons of expediency. Likewise, the use of mechanical slaughter has become widespread in the halal industry to deal with the very high demand for chicken amongst Muslim consumers.

Inside the UK Muslim community, the people who have looked at these contentious questions, whether scholars or journalists, have tended, as is often the case within the Islamic context, to emphasise the jurisprudential (*fiqh*) elements of the issue, though in some cases they also touch upon issues of meat quality.⁴ Thus the debate is framed around which method of certification is more authentic according to the religious principles and scholarly tradition, and thereby fit to be followed by the community. While this is a fundamental aspect and deserving of study, it can be noted

that there has been a distinct lack of analysis of the wider sociological arena in which the halal industry and its certification are embedded. Therefore it must be asked: is it not also important to seek to analyse how changes in UK society generally, driven by shifts in technology and culture, have impacted the British Muslim community's self-organisation to develop standards of halal? Can we be, as some sources seem in part to suggest, wedded to the idea that these debates of jurisprudence exist as if in a vacuum, in which sacred texts are approached by their interpreters in a higher sphere, returning to practical application once the issues are solved and the correct judgement already concluded?⁵ Or if we give our experts of jurisprudence and science more credit for being grounded in the practical needs of their community, is it still not worthwhile to suspend the polemic in order to take an impartial look at the different parties within the debate and try to get some focus on why this situation has developed in the way that it has?⁶

This report will investigate these issues surrounding certification within the halal meat industry in the UK on three levels. The starting point will be a theoretical analysis of the concepts 'halal' and 'community', and the process of rationalisation, first identified by Max Weber, as it has affected UK society in general and the meat industry in particular. The problems that are faced by the Muslim community in eating halal will be seen to stand out more clearly when placed against the contextual background of the social forces of mass consumption and industrialised meat production. The next level assesses the work of the certification bodies, which can be viewed as the Muslim community's attempt to solve these problems and provide objective standards to regulate the industry. However, as has been alluded to, the different criteria used by the most important of these, the HFA and HMC, have led to division and contestation, particularly over issues of certain technological procedures, which are commonplace within the mainstream meat industry, but contentious among religious scholars. In order to illustrate the terms of this debate in an impartial and credible way, excerpts from interviews personally conducted with the leaders of the two organisations in question, will be utilised alongside other research materials. Then, the discourse will be brought to a third level, which will involve an analysis of the deeper sociological dynamics

that underlie the variant approaches taken by the certification bodies. It will be seen that the HFA and HMC, although in one sense organisations with very similar ultimate aims, operate with very different parameters in the way that they see the world, and their relationship and role within the Muslim community and wider society. The conclusion will provide recommendations, drawn from the research, for how the two bodies can move beyond their current impasse for the future benefit of the UK Muslim community.

The UK Muslim Community: Halal Meat within a Rationalised Society

Z. Baumant and T. May argue that one of the central questions of sociology is ‘how do the types of social relations and societies that we inhabit relate to how we see each other, ourselves and our knowledge, actions and their consequences?’⁷ This question is very relevant to the subject of this report, as from it we can appreciate that there is not just a simple relationship between a Muslim community and their knowledge and practice of halal, but a crucial third dimension of the type of society that they inhabit. The present section of this report will sketch these three elements as they exist within the context of the UK, and by doing so clarify the issues at stake in the attempts to develop standards for the halal meat industry.

The root meaning of ‘halal’ in Arabic comes from the verb *halla* with the basic signification of untying a knot.⁸ The religious meaning of halal as permissible is therefore according to the metaphor that God has freed the thing in question so that it is lawful. This is opposed to the *haram* which God has rendered inviolable, and therefore in the context of food, impermissible to consume. This basic opposition is presented strongly in the fifth Qur’anic chapter appropriately named *al-Ma’idah*, which can be translated as ‘The Feast’. The solemnity of the regulations relating to the proper slaughter of meat is made very clear by the fact that the forbidden practices precede the acknowledgement of the general permissibility of foodstuffs in the scripture’s composition:

You are forbidden to eat carrion; blood; pig’s meat; any animal over which any name other than God’s has been invoked; any animal strangled, or victim of a violent blow or a fall, or gored or savaged by a beast of prey, unless you still slaughter it [in the correct manner]; or anything sacrificed on idolatrous altars....⁹

They ask you, Prophet, so what is lawful for them. Say, ‘All good things are lawful for you.’¹⁰

We can add to this the observation that the lines omitted in the quotation above through ellipsis, contain the very famous statement, ‘Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My blessing upon you, and chosen as your religion *islam* [total devotion to God]’.¹¹ What greater emphasis can there be to the centrality of dietary laws (relating first and foremost to meat) to the Islamic way of life, than their enunciation heralding the perfection and completion of the religion itself?¹²

Apart from adhering to the prohibitions already cited within Q5:3, the major conditions of the halal slaughtering method are: the severing of the jugular veins, carotid arteries and windpipes by a razor-sharp blade in a single swipe, but without decapitation; the pronouncing of *tasmiyah* (speaking the name of God with the phrase ‘*bismillahi allahu akbar*’ upon each animal at the time of slaughter); and the draining of all flowing blood from the carcass.¹³

Furthermore, the Qur’anic emphasis on allowable and prohibited methods of slaughter, points to not only the ritual and spiritual dimension associated with making permissible the taking of a warm-blooded life, but also to an understanding of halal that includes aspects of hygiene, health, safety and humane treatment. This is supported by the prophetic practice, or *Sunnah*, in which we find the following statement attributed to the Prophet, ‘Verily God has prescribed excellence in all things. Thus, if you kill (an animal), kill well; and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade so to spare suffering to the animal he slaughters.’¹⁴

A direct line can be traced from this understanding within the Islamic sources and the viewpoint of Masood Khawaja, the President of the HFA:

Previously what it was that [the community of UK] Muslims used to think, for example in the slaughtering....that if a Muslim slaughters a lamb, sheep or a chicken that that becomes halal. That is not the case. Halal means permissible, meaning wholesome, pure and fit for human consumption. So our emphasis for the sake of Muslims, for the sake of giving this particular message, which I illustrated to you

just now, is that it is not only in compliance with the *shariah*, but in compliance with the hygiene as well. Packaging and labelling as well. It complies with all the environmental health issues as well...¹⁵

With the general meaning, objectives, and technical criteria of halal clarified, we shall briefly look at the concept of 'community'. A good definition of community, in the religious sense, is as follows:

A collection of people, who are not clearly defined or circumscribed, but who agree to something that other people reject and bestow an authority upon those beliefs, may be referred to as a *community*. While we may try to justify or explain this 'togetherness', it is a spiritual unity that is foremost in its characterization. Without this in place, there is not community. Agreement, or at least the readiness and potential to agree, is assumed to be the primary underpinning for all community members. As such, the unifying factors are taken to be stronger and more important than anything which may divide it, while the differences between members are secondary in comparison to their similarities.¹⁶

The overall preponderance of beliefs and practices shared by UK Muslims certainly qualifies them for the description of a 'community' in the above sense. One instance of this is in the overwhelming consensus within the British Muslim community to purchase and eat halal food. Halal butchers and takeaways spring up wherever Muslims settle, and statistics bear witness to a very sizable halal meat market: 'Meat Hygiene Service figures from 2004 suggest that 114 million halal animals and 2.1 million kosher animals are killed annually... Each year more than £2bn is spent on halal meat by British Muslims.'¹⁷ It is important to note that these figures are a way of expressing the ideal, or what could be called the social construction of halal, as they are aggregated from every slaughterhouse, or shop which self-defines as 'halal'. The commonality of Muslims within the UK community, demonstrate their commitment to the principles of halal by shopping at these establishments, which are in turn supplied by the slaughterhouses. If this socially constructed mass halal industry could be taken at simple face value, however, there would be little need for the

certification organisations that shall be the focus of this report. So what is going on within the industry leading to this doubt about the authenticity of halal? One aspect, which has already been alluded to, concerns the limits of enforceable legal authority regarding the term halal within the UK. This comes down to the lack of both a universally agreed technical definition for it and state legislation to back it up. This is an important issue, to which we shall return. However, to understand developments within the industry more clearly, it is important to first look at it in terms of its underlying structure, logic and direction. In this regard it is useful to bring in Max Weber's theory of 'the rationalisation process.'

Weber is notable for describing modern western civilisation as having historically developed into a rational system, in which four aspects came to dominate society, and in particular bureaucratic institutions, whether political, economic, or social: efficiency, predictability, calculability and nonhuman technologies which exert control over people.¹⁸ The unique character of this rationality is its formal nature, which is based on institutionalising rules to find the optimum means to ends and 'without regard for persons'.¹⁹ Once these rules have been set, no person – or virtually no person – within the structure has a choice of whether to follow them or not, though the institution will itself continually refine them.²⁰ The development of this structure granted considerable advantages for furthering the profits of the capitalist economic model and has been successful in continually expanding its reach, such that today it is firmly established in most areas of human life, particularly in so-called developed countries, such as the UK. Moreover, it is so tied into the administration and economy of modern nation states, that the very word 'developed' arguably amounts to an assessment of how far the rationalisation process has gone. As the contemporary UK meat industry has developed, this rationalisation process combined with technological advances has made possible the rearing and slaughter of animals and the sale of their meat at an increasingly rapid pace.²¹ With this context in mind, it is now beneficial to return to the question posed earlier, what is happening within the industry leading to this doubt about the authenticity of halal? The first thing to be said is that it is a fundamental mistake to believe that the halal meat industry in the UK, at least in its current state, is somehow divorced

from the economic pressures and technological methodology of the wider meat industry. The type of society within which the UK meat industry as a whole is situated is one with the characteristics of rationalisation, as defined above, and it cannot be assumed that this will fit easily with traditional religious norms. In fact, evidence has emerged which points to a severe divergence between aspects of modern rationalised and Islamic ritualised slaughter within the UK.

Masood Khawaja freely admits that 80% or more of the halal meat industry is owned and controlled by non-Muslims, and while these, of course, should by law be using Muslim slaughtermen and adhering to a credible standard of halal,²² it is far from evident that this is actually the case. The HMC website lists a string of dubious or downright fraudulent practices that it claims are endemic within the industry including: lack of pronunciation of *tasmiyah*, taped *tasmiyah* (recorded rather than live), blessed blades (writing *tasmiyah* on the blade as a substitute), incorrect slaughter methods, non-Muslim slaughtermen, and so on.²³ Of course, in accordance with Weber's analysis, when these practices have been introduced, it has been to more efficiently and predictably transform living animals into saleable meat, at an increased profit margin.

At the same time, what can be said about the appetite for meat, which both fuels and is fuelled by this trade, encouraging suppliers to make profits by meeting the demand through intensive farming and increased mechanisation? The high consumption of meat in general and red meat in particular amongst British Muslims is well documented.²⁴ Here the divergence between the logic of rationalisation and the Islamic ethos is at its most stark, as this appetite is inimical to key Islamic principles, which commend living without excess or extravagance, but instead with harmony, even stewardship towards creation, including the natural environment and animal kingdom. Could it be the case that the rationalisation process has unfairly tipped the balance between Muslim and animal, so that in the wake of unprecedented technological change and expediency, the true spirit and practice of halal has been left behind? This is the dark side of the rationalisation process, which can be called its irrational, or unreasonable side, the dehumanising of the human being itself.²⁵

Gai Eaton comments on the same process in regard to the effects on workers who are denied the full expression of their potential by the non-human controlling technologies (one of Weber's four aspects of rationalisation) which they must use:

These [modern] cities are fitting barracks for workers whose metabolism, mental as well as physical, must be adjusted to the requirements of the machine. The man who lives in a natural environment has a fair chance of reaching out to something beyond nature; but he who lives in an artificial one has done well if he succeeds simply in remaining human. To do so the worker at a conveyor belt in a vast modern factory needs to possess the kind of strength and heroism which, in another place, might have carried him to sanctity.²⁶

This issue of the limits of appetite for meat is one in which, to a degree, both Shaykh Yunus Dudhwala, Chairman of the HMC and Masood Khawaja, President of the HFA, find common ground. Shaykh Dudhwala comments:

I think most Muslims should reduce their meat intake. Red meat intake is far far more than what it is supposed to be. And also, we eat a lot of chicken as well, so I think our meat intake is far more than it's supposed to be from a health perspective.²⁷

On the other hand, Masood Khawaja states:

What we are saying in the Halal Food Authority is, 'Eat less, eat wisely'. Halal meat sometimes is second-rate meat as well. Muslims eat very much meat, because it is available that much in the market. Chicken has become one of the topmost meat industries throughout the world, everybody eats meat. But what they do not realise, is because of the intensive farming and all that, the chicken is not actually chicken. I always say sometimes, it might become as if I'm trying to make a pun out of it here. No it's not. Chicken is not chicken. Lamb is not lamb, right? Our vegetables are not vegetables at times, because these are being grown *differently* [Masood Khawaja's emphasis].²⁸

Yet the common ground on this matter of health belies some very deep differences in methodology when it comes to the issue of how to try to deal with the industry problems that have been presented above, as well as the relationship that Muslims as a community should have with these technologies that dominate the halal industry, just as they dominate the mainstream. This is the subject matter of the next section.

Certification as a Solution: Issues of Divergence and Contestation

Halal certification in the UK is essentially an activity of the voluntary sector, and both HFA and HMC state clearly on their websites that they are non-profit, or voluntary organisations.²⁹ As has been mentioned, doubts raised about the ownership, control, prevalent practices and even the very authenticity of much of the halal meat industry in the UK have led to the emergence of these bodies from within the Muslim community; the HFA in 1994 and the HMC in 2003. Some slaughterhouses and food manufacturing groups publish the criteria by which they slaughter, or will have a religious scholar testify that their operation is genuine at a local level, but it is widely accepted within the UK Muslim community that the HFA and HMC are the only two bodies seriously attempting to certify the production of halal meat at a national level.

The development of these certification organisations from within the UK Muslim community can be seen as an understandable response to the structural factors existing in the meat industry and the lack of a UK law defining halal. By way of analogy, this lack of definition can be found on the Food Standards Agency website in regard to the terms ‘vegetarian’ and ‘vegan’.³⁰ There is also an obvious precedent for such a model of community-based accreditation of religious slaughter in the Jewish London Board of Shechita, which has been in operation since 1804,³¹ and the National Council of Shechita Boards of Great Britain, established in 1953 and ‘encompassing all UK Shechita activities and joined [sic] in presenting a unified platform for the protection and defence of Shechita’.³²

Today, the HMC and HFA both have sizeable operations and their own systems and methodologies for carrying out certification.³³ There is no space in this report for an exhaustive comparison of the structure of the two bodies, but relevant aspects will be discussed in the next section in the context of the social dynamics of their work within the community. The present focus must remain on the problem of an agreed definition of halal, as this is fundamental to understanding the conflict and contention that has risen between them and their adherents.

In dealing with the issues of definition, it would be actually more accurate to use the term *dhabh* (Islamic ritual slaughter of meat) rather than halal, which means that which is permissible in general and can be applied to other types of food. Thus once *dhabh* has been carried out correctly on a permissible animal, the meat will be halal. As '*dhabh*' is much less well known in the UK community, the term 'halal slaughter' has become an acceptable way to express the meaning.³⁴

The absolutely essential aspects of valid *dhabh*, which have been given earlier in this report, are actually agreed upon by both the HFA and HMC. The main divergence between the two groups is rather on the interpretation of these conditions when applied to two issues of technology, which have arisen in the drive for mass production and mechanisation of slaughter: electric stunning of animals before they are slaughtered and the machine-slaughter of poultry.

Pre-slaughter stunning is mandatory within the UK (now following EU legislation) for all slaughtered meat, except those religious communities that have been given a dispensation to continue their traditional methods of ritual slaughter.³⁵ This is still in effect in UK law, although there is a powerful campaign in motion to convince the government to remove it on ethical grounds, an idea opposed by Muslim and Jewish groups. The Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) made this recommendation in 2003, which was rejected by the government in 2004. In a 2009 report, FAWC reiterated the recommendation and the latest government has not, as yet, responded.³⁶

Thus in dealing with the issue of stunning in relation to the major halal certification bodies, we should look from two points of view: the aspect of whether it is religiously permissible; and also whether it has any relevant bearing on the humaneness of slaughter. These different angles to the question will be scrutinised in turn.

The HMC opposes stunning prior to slaughter on religious grounds. Chairman Yunus Dudhwala accepts that according to the majority scholarly opinion a stunned animal, which was then correctly slaughtered

while still alive, would be halal. However, he states that because this slaughter would be an extremely detestable act in jurisprudential terms (*makruh tahrim*); the stun gives the animal pain; and that some stunned animals (particularly smaller ones) could die and still enter the market as (impermissible) carrion; the HMC will not certify slaughterhouses that use any pre-slaughter stunning.³⁷ The HMC sees stunning as both unnecessary and religiously dubious, arguing that through adopting the most precautionary standards, its certification can be acceptable to the largest number of Muslims within the UK. However, according to some sources, stunning is overwhelmingly practised in the halal industry, with perhaps 70% of animals having some form of stunning used on them (usually electric).³⁸ If we consider that this practice, in terms of efficiently stilling the animals ready for slaughter, arguably adds a great deal of profit to the current halal meat industry, will the HMC be content to just ignore those slaughterhouses that will not give it up, even if it limits the impact they can have in ensuring the even more essential aspects of halal are practised? This issue of what practical strategy the certification authorities are to adopt when religious principles run up against economic realities will also be relevant to the issue of machine slaughter.

The HFA have a much more complex relationship to the technology of stunning, as despite admitting it is 'frowned upon in terms of Islamic law', they accept (but do not require) two varieties of pre-slaughter electric stun within their criteria of certification, providing they are of a weak enough current to avoid killing the animal: electric water bath (for poultry: chicken, turkeys, ducks), and electric tongs (for ovine animals: lambs, sheep and goats). The HFA authorises no stun method for bovine animals, such as cattle, presumably because of no effective electric method being available for such large creatures.³⁹ Masood Khawaja, argues for these particular methods as follows:

[This] stunning does not change the colour, taste or texture of the meat. With stunning of this kind, the electricity can be controlled. Imagine a dimmer switch on your wall, if you go to the left...you will come to zero. If you go to the right, you can increase the light as the current (increases). So what we say is that it is possible to control that

to immobilise the animal only, so that the animal, after that, would do the convulsions so that the *dam masfuh* (the flowing blood) is drained out...

So I think you can control that, but...yes, there is a section in our school of thought which says that slaughtering has to be done as it was done before. But for everything else they would apply science, they would hang the chicken or animal upside down, but they would not apply that particular science. Reams of books are written on Qur'an and science, Qur'an and science, Qur'an and science, but they're not looking at science. They have a mobile telephone in their pocket all the time, but they're not looking at science that way.

There is a very important point here. It is not allowed, except that the authority or the representative in the slaughterhouse would confirm if the animal is dead, or is not dead, prior to slaughter. Who is it? The veterinary surgeon.

So he is the one that calibrates the electric current, so that the size of the animal, the weight of the animal is actually kept in mind prior to doing that. So that's why we say he is the one to switch on and off that calibrator, that stunner, so that the animal is surely not dying prior to slaughter...so this is why the Halal Food Authority is (much more importantly) of the opinion that we can use science but we can make it subservient to the Islamic injunctions.⁴⁰

The HFA argument for stunning therefore rests on two benefits according to its own point of view: the expediency of the automation that stunning allows, creating greater trading profits; and the hygienic quality of the meat which can be produced. These are evidently, and self-consciously even, elements in complete harmony with the rationalisation process which structures the industry generally. They are seen to outweigh the religious undesirability of the practice according to the majority of scholars, while the most serious religious argument against stunning – that smaller animals (e.g. chickens) could die before slaughter – is mitigated by the fine-control within the technology used and the precaution of the presence of a veterinary surgeon. Of course, those opposed to stunning

reject this as a case of commercial pressures being made to override religious principles. Furthermore, in the case of poultry, it can be argued that it is, in practice, impossible to check whether the electric stun is killing a percentage of the processed animals before they are slaughtered; and therefore all meat produced through such a process is doubtful and Muslims would be obliged to refrain from eating it out of caution.

But what about the issue of humane treatment? This is *the* major reason for the generally mandatory nature of stunning within the UK, and actually represents a break from the usual logic of rationalisation, by taking account of a property extremely difficult to quantify, pain. Ironically, the argument for consideration of the animal comes from a different discourse, the discourse of rights, which in the West is originally rooted much closer to religious ideas than to those of rational expediency.⁴¹ The concept of a quick, painless, humane death, therefore, is completely in line with the prophetic method of slaughter, as quoted earlier. However, it is felt to be problematic for Muslims, and indeed Jews, to accept that the method of slaughter practised by their supreme moral and religious exemplars (the prophets Muhammad and Moses respectively), could be improved upon ethically. This point of view is put forward by Shaykh Yunus Dudhwala on behalf of the HMC:

In terms of the ethical perspective, I think the studies are very inconclusive in terms of what is more humane for the animal or not. What we believe as Muslims is '*wa ma arsalnaka illa rahmatan lil-alamin*', We did not send you, O Prophet, except as a mercy to all of mankind, including all of the worlds, including the animal worlds.⁴² And the Prophet Muhammad (*salla allahu alayhi wa sallam*) showed us how to kindly and humanely slaughter animals. Now we feel that that is the best method for the animal, when it is cut with a sharp knife, a very very sharp knife, and it is cut at the jugular veins and the veins are made to bleed. But we feel that if there was a better way of doing it, the Prophet (*salla allahu alayhi wa sallam*) also could have stunned the animal by hitting it with a stone, or with something else at the time, but this was considered to be cruel.⁴³

The HFA, which does certify halal meat that has undergone stunning (under the limited conditions described above), states in its documentation that '[pre-stunned-to-stun and not to kill]...has always been found to cause lesser suffering and pain to animal(s)/bird(s)'.⁴⁴ However, Masood Khawaja refused to affirm this statement when interviewed as the following transcript shows:

RH (Ramon Harvey): Can I ask you particularly about stunning, do you feel there is a humane or an ethical issue here? Do you think stunning has a benefit in terms of the humaneness of the slaughter?

MK: No, as a matter of fact that I would not put into the equation on behalf of Halal Food Authority.

RH: So that doesn't come into it?

MK: There are some who would actually say that stunning has been invented because of the need for humane slaughtering. That is totally wrong.⁴⁵

The explanation for this apparent disjoint in policy is unclear and would perhaps benefit from a follow-up interview. What is obvious, however, is that neither of the major halal certification bodies in the UK wants to give credence to the idea of stunning as more humane than the traditional *dhabh* method. As well as the religious dimension to this issue, there is also an understandable concern not to weaken the moral argument for continued exemption from mandatory stunning.

The diverse opinions on the issue of humaneness reflect the difficulty in assessing the reality of the subjective experience of pain. Recent research carried out in New Zealand in 2009 seemed to show that calves having their throats cut did record pain signals until loss of consciousness (up to 2 minutes, but averaging 10 to 30 seconds). The animals were at the time lightly anaesthetised, but it was stated by the researchers that these pain signals represented what they would have felt if awake.⁴⁶ However, Dr Temple Grandin of the Department of Animal Science, Colorado State University, USA, a philosophical leader of the animal welfare movement,

raises doubts that the size of the knife used, at 24.5cm, was long enough to achieve the very quick loss of consciousness that has been observed in other studies of ritual slaughter. She also opines that in her experience kosher slaughter is practised with a much longer knife than that used for halal.⁴⁷ However, this is more a matter of requiring best practice to be followed within the slaughtering industry rather than any inherent difference in the method of slaughter or tools used by the two religions. For instance, the HFA guidelines for *dhabh* specify an extremely sharp knife four times the width of the animal's neck, which is certainly no less than that used for *shechita*. A final important point in relation to the UK halal industry is that the overwhelming majority of meat is sheep or chicken, and these animals lose consciousness far more quickly than cattle. Thus, *if* all due procedures are followed, including the use of a well designed (so that animals do not witness the slaughter of others) and fully equipped slaughterhouse, a skilled ritual slaughterman can induce over 90% of cattle to collapse within 10 seconds;⁴⁸ sheep average between 2 and 14 seconds;⁴⁹ and chickens almost immediately.⁵⁰

In light of the shortness of these possible times, the real problem from the point of view of humane treatment does not seem to be the presence or lack of stunning, but the danger that profits are put above welfare, and standards are not maintained, including the employment of suitably skilled staff. Of course, even the irreversible commercial stun techniques, such as the bolt gun, can be incredibly painful if done improperly and miss the head. However, the fact that ritual slaughter is made in the name of God, and requires real precision and skill to be done humanely, makes the stakes correspondingly higher. If a religious community is going to insist on performing manual ritual slaughter, it is surely incumbent upon them to perform it with a high degree of excellence, as mentioned in the prophetic tradition.

The question of mechanical slaughter is even more divisive than that of stunning. Whereas stunning is only an issue of outright impermissibility at a subsidiary level (if already dead animals are being slaughtered due to the stunning process), machine-slaughter, only practised on poultry in the UK, is problematic due to its disruption of the very concept of an

individual slaughterman using a blade and pronouncing the *tasmiyah*. Instead, chickens are taken down a line to be cut by a fixed mechanical blade. The HMC will not certify chicken slaughtered in this manner as halal, while the HFA will, as long as it fulfils all of the other criteria, and that a number of Muslim slaughtermen are physically present reciting *tasmiyah* equal to the rate of slaughter by the machine. To summarise the jurisprudential argument of the HMC, it follows the opinion of scholars who believe that while automation in the process is in general acceptable, the mechanisation of the act of slaughter causes an irrevocable break of the connection between the killing cut and the spoken *tasmiyah* – both necessary elements of *dhabh*.⁵¹ In a survey they carried out of 282 Muslim religious scholars in the UK, 95% opposed mechanical slaughter for being an unacceptable method.⁵² The HMC takes this strong scholarly consensus against the practice as a legitimate representation of the opinions of the uninformed general Muslim population, for whom they act as religious leaders and guides.⁵³ As in the case of stunning, the strictness of this approach, while certainly religiously laudable, is arguably in danger of becoming divorced from the reality of the industry. Yunus Dudhwala states:

Even if there is large production of halal going on, it might push up the cost by 5p or 10p [per chicken] by employing people to do the slaughter, but I don't think that should stop us from implementing the *shariah* principles of slaughter. The *shariah* principles of slaughter should come first...⁵⁴

At the same time, the HFA website admits that in a modern, mechanised slaughterhouse 6,000 – 9,000 chickens can be slaughtered an hour, and just like stunning, this is widely acknowledged as providing the bulk of the current market.⁵⁵ Any serious movement from mechanical to hand slaughter will inevitably cause a massive and very unattractive loss of profits to the operators,⁵⁶ who are majority non-Muslim and therefore are less concerned about ideas of Muslim scholarly consensus, as long as they can provide some sort of religious backing for the definition of halal they use. The question would then be if the alleged support of the general population for the principle of non-mechanical slaughter claimed by the

HMC would extend to an increase in the price of chicken. Of course, the fact is rather that without government intervention, any ban of mechanical slaughter is extremely unlikely in the current context, perpetuating the flooding of the market with cheap mass-slaughtered chicken and leaving the HMC standard, in practice, the exception rather than the rule. So, as in the issue of stunning, while the HMC can argue it sticks to the more precautionous, authentic standard as determined by scholars, the HFA can counter that by being more lenient with the technology it allows, it has been able to make a real difference in bringing practical regulation to the industry as it exists on the ground.

A good example of how these differences translate into social division and confusion is the furore surrounding the trial of 'halal' chicken, accredited by the HFA, in more than 70 KFC restaurants around the UK, which managed to upset a number of constituencies. There have been protests from non-Muslims about the loss of products containing pork within the restaurants, as well as those convinced that the spread of halal KFC was a sign of the rise of 'barbaric' halal slaughter methods into the mainstream.⁵⁷ At the other end of the spectrum, there have been protests and boycotts from Muslims who reject the mechanical slaughter method as religiously invalid and an official statement from the Lancashire Council of Mosques that the KFC products does not fulfill its criteria and cannot be deemed halal.⁵⁸ The fact that numerous less famous 'halal' chicken outlets, frequented by Muslims and non-Muslims alike across the UK may very well be using identically slaughtered meat, has not, however, generated the same headlines.

A very interesting dimension to this ongoing debate is that both the HFA and HMC are adamant that technological innovation, the rationalisation of slaughter, is entirely acceptable as long as it does not usurp the principles of the *shariah*. The divergence is on the detail of where to draw this line and the basis by which this is done. A crude, but seemingly accurate, characterisation is that the HMC are idealists and the HFA pragmatists, both potentially possessing advantages and disadvantages for the UK Muslim community. The real pity is that, while the spokespersons for these organisations have been careful to not mention the other by name,⁵⁹

their differences have led to confusion, dispute and even rancour amongst ordinary Muslims.⁶⁰ It is to these questions about the divergent perspectives of the two organisations, and their place and social action within the community and wider society that we shall now turn in order to try to analyse the potential for moving forward.

The Social Dynamics of Halal Certification: Top-Down versus Bottom-Up

The HFA was set up nine years before the HMC and in that time became well established, both within the halal slaughter and wider food industry. Today, from Kelloggs cereals to KFC; from ASDA to British Airways, the HFA logo can be found on food products declaring them to be approved as halal.⁶¹ Talking to the President of the HFA, Masood Khawaja, his keenness to integrate halal certification with the structure of UK food regulation more generally is very evident. Thus, when asked what he feels it means to the average Muslim to see the HFA certificate, he says:

The average Muslim when he sees the Halal Food Authority logo, he doesn't discern that for the last 16 years Halal Food Authority has been accrediting and authenticating and endorsing meat and food-stuffs throughout the chain. And giving that authenticity that it has been seen, not only from the Islamic *shariah* point of view, but also from the point of view of hygiene, food safety, environmental health and especially (that) it has the compliance of what you would call EU regulation. Previously it used to be the regulation of Ministry of Agriculture or DEFRA. Whereas now everything in the UK is covered by EU laws.⁶²

In terms of world-view this can be called a kind of top-down approach to halal certification, serving the UK Muslim community through working to establish halal regulation at a mass-production level by forging links with major industry players. The success of the HFA on these terms is demonstrated by the fact that many of its partners are household names. Also important is the role the HFA has played in influencing government legislation through active consultation, which has resulted in important aspects of halal slaughter becoming legally mandatory.⁶³ The HFA website states that it is 'working closely with the Food Standards Agency on a consultation basis on, among other issues, animal feed, beef labelling, sheep and poultry strategy, water in frozen poultry, gelatine, health and hygiene in food manufacture that directly concern Muslims and Islamic dietary

laws.⁶⁴ By pragmatically dealing with the industry, and acknowledging its ownership and general orientation, the HFA have worked to improve its standards in a holistic manner, looking beyond the 'religious validity' dimension to other important issues such as quality and hygiene. Masood Khawaja repeats almost as if a catchphrase, 'Halal...means wholesome, pure and fit for human consumption.'⁶⁵

The HFA's perspective on the halal industry in the UK reveals also a comfort with the rationalisation process and automation of slaughter not shared by all of the UK Muslim community. This has led to widespread criticism of the HFA for complicity with the industry and its modern methods of slaughter that are often viewed as religiously dubious, if not completely unacceptable. What the HFA sees as bringing regulation to the industry, others see as legitimising and perpetuating un-Islamic practices. The argument consistently made against it is that it lacks credible scholarly backing for the contentious positions that it takes in relation to slaughtering technology (described in the previous section).⁶⁶ When asked about the question of scholarship, Masood Khawaja insists that there has been a panel of scholars supporting the HFA from the beginning and that this is broad-based with representatives from different schools of thought (Deobandi, Barelvi, Ahl al-Hadith, and Akhbari Shiah).⁶⁷

The response of the HMC to this – and it is important to understand that the very existence of the HMC can, at least in part, be explained as a protest to the HFA's concessions to industry practice – is not just to put forward a different set of jurisprudential opinions. The HMC instead proposes an entirely different way of regulating halal slaughter within the UK, one that is scholarly led and based on grassroots organisation and awareness building. This could be termed a bottom-up approach to the issue, one in which the HMC has tirelessly worked to gain community support for its work by, for example, holding educational seminars, publishing a series of newsletters, building a network of traditionally trained Muslim scholars and even developing a Facebook page.⁶⁸ The HMC argues that its more cautious criteria for halal slaughter have the backing of the majority of religious scholars in the UK, and that it is disingenuous

for any halal certification organisation to adhere to less strict criteria that it believes the community has not been sufficiently informed about, and would not accept if it were.⁶⁹ The emphasis on scholarly consensus is very important to the HMC, as they see this as the essential litmus test of legitimacy for establishing any standard of halal within the community. This is in turn rooted in the traditional Islamic perspective of the role of the *ulama* (religious scholars) as the holders of authority in religious matters ahead of that possessed by the state. The language of scholarly authority is prominent in the discourse of Shaykh Yunus Dudhwala, himself a traditionally educated scholar. In referring to prospects for the future of certification, he says:

I hope we can get to that stage where some scholars do sit down and take this issue by the scruff of the neck and deal with it in terms of setting a standard that is acceptable by the majority of the scholars in the UK...which is accepted by all the certification bodies.⁷⁰

This does not mean that the HMC is uninterested in following EU regulations and hygiene regulations and so on. However, the impression that is certainly given by the material on their website and discussion with their Chairman is that they would be quite happy, if that were possible, for the halal meat industry to be entirely self-regulated by the Muslim community. Their emphasis on continuous monitoring is reflected in the structure of their inspection model, which is to have their inspectors present at every level of the chain from slaughterhouses, to processing plants, and then to regularly check the stock of its certified outlets, to make sure it is entirely of HMC provenance.⁷¹ This is again a matter of extreme caution, which is based on an acknowledgement of the prevalence within the halal market of meat that does not fulfil their criteria (non-stunned, non-mechanically slaughtered). They therefore argue that, in the current UK environment, the normal basis of trust and good opinion '*husn zann*' has been overridden by the need for certainty.⁷² This is backed up by the juristic principle quoted on their website: 'Everything is permissible and Halal except those items which are clearly proven to be prohibited and Haram. On the contrary, all meat of animals is HARAM unless clearly proven to be Halal.'⁷³ Overall then, as demonstrated by the

motto 'Your Seal of Assurance',⁷⁴ the HMC aims to put a system together that engenders certainty in the consumer that its meat fulfils the strictest religious criteria of halal and has not been tampered with anywhere in the chain of supply. The HFA, although also employing inspectors, works more on the basis of discrete regular audits, rather than continuous monitoring as practised by the HMC. These audits additionally determine whether there is compliance with EU regulations of slaughter, as well as the validity of the Islamic method, according to HFA criteria. The HFA argue that their system is sufficient to ensure standards are maintained down the chain, though at the level of individual shops they rely on the general and public system of trading standards:

When we started, we started looking at shops, but I think shops have to be controlled by – and this is who we left it to – the trading standards people. In the UK we have a law of trading standards for description and labelling. So they are the people if a shop does any kind of misdemeanour or the shop does any kind of mixing of any meat or things, then they are answerable to trading standards people. Who are in turn (answerable to) environmental health people, those are in turn regulated by the councils, who are regulated by the food standards agency, and so on.⁷⁵

The HMC counter this approach by stating that only their method engenders the required level of certainty. However, considerable resources are required to operate the HMC model, and for that reason it has not been able to expand as much as the organisation may have liked.⁷⁶ In the FAQ's section of the website, the following can be found:

Q: When will HMC expand in other towns and cities?

A: It is not possible for the current staff and volunteers to cover other areas due to the shortage of manpower and resources. However, we recommend that the concerned Muslims of these areas join HMC and promote its activities in their areas by monitoring local outlets. We will give all necessary assistance and guidance.⁷⁷

Thus the logical extension of the HMC's grassroots-based approach is to try to empower local community groups to carry out their own monitoring activities according to the standards and criteria it has established. However, it is not clear that the mass of average Muslims are that concerned with the finer points of these discussions. The areas of the UK that have gained a significant number of HMC butchers tend to correlate with the section of the Muslim community that follow the Deobandi school of thought, which forms the foundation of the HMC's scholarly base. This is in no way to claim only the 'Deobandi community' is interested in HMC-approved meat – in some circles at least, it has become the standard preferred choice for any Muslim who gains knowledge of the different halal criteria being applied and wishes to be as cautious as possible – but it clearly is a factor in the clustering of HMC butchers. It also shows that not all sections of the UK Muslim community are convinced that national certification schemes are all that necessary. An example that highlights this phenomenon is that while there are no less than thirty-seven butchers on the HMC website bearing the 'E' London postcode, there are none bearing the 'W' postcode, despite there being a significant number of Muslims in the West of the city (although admittedly less than in the East).⁷⁸ This disparity can be quite easily explained, however, by reference to the ethnic background of the two areas. While the East is dominated by a broadly Deobandi influenced Bengali community, the West has a high proportion of Arab and Somali residents, who have seemingly ignored the growth of the HMC within the capital. The HFA, in contrast, does not publish a central list of the butchers that utilise its products on its website, but by increasingly going through major supermarket and wholesale suppliers, it would seem to be reaching a generally larger and more diverse cross-section of the Muslim population, although arguably one less well-informed about the issues surrounding the criteria for halal. Such observations, and others, should by now be clear to see as springing from the distinctive characteristics of the varying structures and strategies of the two organisations.

The Future: 'Which Mouse will put the Bell on the Neck of the Cat?'

Looking to the future, it is evident to the impartial observer that a continued stand-off between the HFA and HMC is of little benefit to either organisation, or more importantly, the improvement of the halal industry, in terms of the quality of meat, the authenticity of the halal slaughter practised, or the welfare of the animals. Both organisations state it is very important to sit together and find a way to move forward. However, the sticking points in terms of slaughter techniques that have already been analysed seem to be quite intractable, unless one or the other organisation is willing to give ground and abandon their criteria. The view of one commentator, an unqualified supporter of HMC, on this issue is as follows:

[We] wish that our brothers at HFA, seriously re-examine the real need for their existence, for the sake of the Muslim community in UK...[W]hereas HMC could never leave their principles of Slaughter, as it would mean, without exaggeration, them accepting to eat Haram, HFA could. The reason for this is that for them (HFA) to adopt the higher standards of HMC, could only be viewed by the Shariah as a praiseworthy step, as it is the more precautious of the two positions.⁷⁹

This judgement has its logic: from a religious perspective the HFA could accept the HMC criteria a lot more easily than vice-versa. However, it represents a quite unrealistic flattening of the complexities of the issue, particularly relating to the rationalisation process in the meat industry, which seems likely, if anything, to intensify in coming years. Even if the HFA chose to adopt this step and both major certification bodies offered a united front against stunning and mechanical slaughter, would these practices go away? The fact is that neither stunning nor mechanical slaughter can, properly speaking, be called *haram* in an unqualified manner. Anyone supplying meat through these technologies, and their profitability makes this very likely indeed, can always argue that they are valid and halal (as the HFA does at the moment) – at least according to

some scholars, even if a minority. Perhaps if HFA rejected these practices they would be further delegitimised and eventually abandoned. Another possibility is that they would continue to flood the market, but with even less regulation than before.

Both the HFA and HMC seem to accept that neither one of them is going to disappear any time soon, or necessarily abandon their established criteria of halal. Yunus Dudhwala, when asked about why there seems to be such a difficulty for the Muslim community in the UK to agree on a single standard of halal, answers:

I think it goes back to history, because the Muslim community never controlled its halal market from a certification perspective until very late on, and by that time the octopus, the tentacles of the octopus had spread wide, and therefore trying to gather them and trying to get them under control is near impossible.⁸⁰

The proposal of the HMC, given what the Chairman calls the ‘confusing’ situation of more than one certification body, is that all of them should be given an independent review by a separate organisation, such as the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). This would have the job of scrutinising the actions of each one and reporting on their activities, so that the community could get an unbiased viewpoint and make their own minds up about which to use.⁸¹

When this idea was put to the President of the HFA he answered in the following way:

When I was a child there was a story in a book...which was ‘How can we tell the cat is coming?’ the mice used to say. Somebody said, ‘We can put a kind of bell on the neck [of the cat], so that each time it moves a ding-dong would come’. Right? So one of the old [variety of] mice, said ‘Who is going to put that bell around his neck?’ Right? So the situation is this: who is going to do this movement? There has been some sad talk about it that the regulatory team should come from Westminster. Would you imagine that if Westminster tries to

make the halal law, would you not have the idea that ‘are they telling us what to do in Islam?’ Right? So what we have got to do is we have to understand ourselves first, what we require.⁸²

This is a very interesting answer, because with his parable Masood Khawaja highlights the pitfalls of this solution: do the organisations with the authority to carry out such a regulatory role have the resources and will to grapple with what has become such an emotive and divisive issue? Furthermore, and this is the really important point, is this idea of ‘monitoring the monitors’ really the way forward for the community on the issue of halal certification? What if the team chosen are accused of bias? Who in turn ‘monitors’ them?

Despite the multitude of problems and issues that this research has highlighted – often a lot more complex than many want to concede – there are some encouraging signs that things can be, and to an extent already are, better for the community in terms of halal certification. Even merely the presence of organisations such as the HMC and HFA in the UK and the desire by slaughterhouses, butchers, supermarkets, restaurants and food manufacturers to be certified by them is a massive advance over the situation twenty years ago. An observation made by the representatives from both bodies in the interviews was that the average Muslim who sees their logo does not really understand what it represents compared to just ‘halal’ without certification. So, for the HFA, the concern is that they do not realise that as well as their criteria of *shariah* slaughter, the HFA logo demonstrates the fulfilment of all EU regulations, in terms of such things as slaughter, hygiene, and environmental health.⁸³ For the HMC, the issue is, on the one hand, that the average Muslim is unaware that meat may be stunned, or in the case of chicken, mechanically slaughtered; and on the other hand, that they will not know that the valid HMC logo always means ‘no-stunning, no mechanised-slaughter’.⁸⁴ However, Masood Khawaja makes clear that he is willing to display the exact criteria used for HFA certification, so that the public can make an informed decision.⁸⁵

It is, therefore, the recommendation of this report that it would be extremely beneficial for the community they serve if the HFA and HMC

could immediately begin to co-ordinate the system of labelling used on their products, for both practical use throughout the supply chain and so as to be easy for consumers to read. The essential information would be the relevant logo of which organisation had done the certification, that all relevant EU laws had been met, whether that particular meat had been stunned pre-slaughter, and whether it had been mechanically slaughtered. It is further recommended that as long as this information were made clear on all meat-based products that there should be an agreement to mutual tolerance over diverse scholarly opinions, whether they are the majority opinion or not, and a serious effort to avoid the language of 'not-halal' in regard to such labelled products, as this is incredibly damaging and confusing to the community at large. Of course, each organisation would be entirely free to continue to educate people about the basis for their criteria and the reasons why they have adopted them.

Looking to the longer-term future, it is put forward for consideration that there are actually ways in which the different emphases and structure of the HFA and HMC could be mutually complementary, rather than oppositional. If through continued discussion, there were a way that the HMC's excellent grassroots work and rigorous monitoring procedures could be combined with the HFA's impressive record of working with government and corporate entities, both nationally and internationally, the UK halal industry could take great strides in terms of its quality and accountability. For this to happen, however, there is a desperate need for all parties to look beyond their own organisation's self-interest, or preferred Islamic opinion; to recognise that the issues are not just black and white; and to realise that the UK Muslim community is better served through positive collaboration than by dispute and competition.

Notes

¹ As a central term of this research and a word widely used in the contemporary UK, the word 'halal' has been anglicised, and left without italics or diacritical marks, following the example of 'kosher'.

² Qur'an 5:4 (henceforth Q5:3 etc.).

³ Interview with Masood Khawaja, 14th September 2010, the full transcript is included within the appendices of this report.

⁴ For instance, see Bora, E., *Whose Halal and Who's Not?*, Q News, 2003, http://www.halalmc.net/resources/stunning_articles/017_whos_halal_whos_not.html [accessed 14th September 2010].

⁵ By way of example, in an answer given to the question of machine-slaughter, Mufti Muhammad ibn Adam presents a long discussion of classical *hadith* (prophetic traditions) and *fiqh* (jurisprudence) texts, and then in almost an aside mentions: 'Finally, one must remember that machine-slaughter is a new phenomenon created by the rapid progress in modern technology. Thus, it is obvious that it is impossible for one to find express rulings with regards to it in the classical sources of Islamic jurisprudence. Its ruling can only be derived from the general principles and guidelines set down in the Qur'an, Sunnah and the classical works of Islamic jurisprudence'. This is, of course, an entirely valid statement. However, it underscores the fact that the answer, despite its jurisprudential richness, would be more nuanced if it directly addressed the issue of changes in society due to modern technology, and gave more acknowledgement to the impact that this may have on the Muslim community, its scholars and the process of the derivation of new legal rulings (*ijtihad*). Ibn Adam al-Kawthari, M., *Machine-slaughtered Meat*, http://qa.sunnipath.com/issue_view.asp?id=2938 [accessed 15th September 2010].

⁶ Tariq Ramadan has made some interesting reflections on the place of context within the process of deriving practical Islamic law, both historically within the tradition and in the contemporary world. See: Ramadan, T., *Radical Reform*, (Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 77-112.

⁷ Baumant, Z. and May, T., *Thinking Sociologically*, (Blackwell, 2001), p. 5.

⁸ Lane, E. W., *Arabic-English Lexicon*, v.1, (Islamic Text Society, 2003), v. 1, p. 619.

⁹ Q5:3. All translations are taken from Abdel Haleem, M., *The Qur'an – English Translation and Parallel Arabic Text*, (Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁰ Q5:4.

¹¹ Q5:3.

¹² For a more detailed analysis of this point, see: Cuypers, M., *The Feast – A Reading of the Fifth Sura of the Qur'an*, (Convivium Press, 2009), pp. 80-2.

¹³ See: Halal Food Authority, *Brief Guidelines for Halal Ovine, Bovine & Poultry Slaughter*, pp. 3-4 (available: <http://www.halalfoodauthority.co.uk> [accessed 16th September 2010]).

¹⁴ *Sahih Muslim*, v.2, (Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000), v. 2, p. 855, *hadith* 5167.

¹⁵ Interview with Masood Khawaja, 14th September 2010.

¹⁶ Baumant, Z. and May, T., *Thinking Sociologically*, p. 43.

¹⁷ http://www.meatradenewsdaily.co.uk/news/300610/european_union_new_labelling_laws_for_halal_meat_0.aspx [accessed 1st September 2010].

¹⁸ Ritzer, G., *The McDonaldization of Society*, (Pine Forge Press, 2011), p. 24.

¹⁹ Weber, M., (Translated and edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, (Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 212-215.

²⁰ Ritzer, G., *The McDonaldization of Society*, (Pine Forge Press, 2011), pp. 24-5.

²¹ Masood Khawaja claims on this point, 'Up to about 25 years (ago) even in England, even in the UK slaughtering was done by hand'. [Interview with Masood Khawaja, 14th September 2010].

²² The statute law (The Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995 (Statutory Instrument (SI) No 1995/731 as amended by SI No 1999/400), permits slaughter by the Islamic method to be done: by a licensed Muslim slaughterman, and in a licensed abattoir or licensed poultry slaughterhouse which is under official veterinary supervision (or in other officially regulated poultry slaughterhouses). Source: http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/farm_animal/welfare/slaughter/qurbani-udhia.htm [accessed 16th September 2010].

²³ HMC also include pre-slaughter stunning and mechanical slaughter methods in their list. However, as versions of these two technologies have been defended by HFA as valid, unlike the other things on the site's list, and this difference is covered in the next section, they have been omitted above. See: http://www.halalmc.net/about_hmc/industry_problems.html [accessed 15th September 2010].

²⁴ Although Muslims make up just five per cent of the population they consume an estimated 20 per cent of all lamb and mutton produced in Britain.

(Meat & Livestock Commission - press release October 2001 on 'Muslim Lamb Campaign'), Source: <http://www.mcb.org.uk/library/statistics.php>, [accessed 16th September 2010].

²⁵ Ritzer, G., *The McDonaldization of Society*, (Pine Forge Press, 2011), p. 143.

²⁶ Eaton, G., *King of the Castle – Choice and Responsibility in the Modern World*, (The Islamic Texts Society, 1990), p. 49.

²⁷ Interview with Shaykh Yunus Dudhwala, 9th September 2010, the full transcript is included within the appendices of this report.

²⁸ Interview with Masood Khawaja, 14th September 2010.

²⁹ <http://www.halalfoodauthority.co.uk/aboutus.html>; [http://www.halal mc.net/about_hmc/overview.html](http://www.halalmc.net/about_hmc/overview.html) [accessed 19th September 2010].

³⁰ 2. There is no definition in law of the terms 'vegetarian' or 'vegan' either at UK or European level... 6. Claims such as, 'suitable for vegetarians' or 'suitable for vegans' are subject to the general controls in sections 1 to 4 of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 (prohibition of false or misleading trade descriptions)... 9. The terms 'vegetarian' and 'vegan' in food labelling are used voluntarily by industry. Where these terms are absent, consumers rely on the list of ingredients. See: <http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/labelregsguidance/vegguidancenotes> [accessed 16th September 2010].

³¹ <http://www.shechita.co.uk/index.htm> [accessed 16th September 2010].

³² <http://www.shechitauk.org/about-us/who-we-are.html> [accessed 16th September 2010].

³³ <http://www.halalfoodauthority.co.uk/members.html>; http://www.halalmc.net/certified_outlets/certified_butchers.html [accessed 19th September 2010].

³⁴ Similarly, while anyone, whether Jew or non-Jew, has probably heard of kosher, there is very little chance that a non-specialist would have heard the term *shechita*, which is analogous to *dhabh*.

³⁵ The exemption dates back to the *Slaughter of Animals (Scotland) Act 1928* and the *Slaughter of Animals Act 1933* (which applied to England and Wales). See: Barclay, C., *Religious Slaughter*, House of Commons Library Note SN/SC/1314 (5th February 2010). Source: http://www.humanism.org.uk/_uploads/documents/HouseofCommonsLibraryNote-ReligiousSlaughter.pdf [accessed 16th September 2010].

³⁶ Barclay, C., *Religious Slaughter*, House of Commons Library Note SN/SC/1314 (5th February 2010). Source: http://www.humanism.org.uk/_uploads/documents/HouseofCommonsLibraryNote-ReligiousSlaughter.pdf [accessed 16th September 2010].

³⁷ Interview with Shaykh Yunus Dudhwala, 9th September 2010.

³⁸ http://www.meatradenewsdaily.co.uk/news/300610/european_union___

new_labelling_laws_for_halal_meat__0.aspx [accessed 1st September 2010].

³⁹ Halal Food Authority, *Brief Guidelines for Halal Ovine, Bovine & Poultry Slaughter*, p. 6 (available: <http://www.halalfoodauthority.co.uk> [accessed 16th September 2010]).

⁴⁰ Interview with Masood Khawaja, 14th September 2010.

⁴¹ Hobbes, one of the first English philosophical writers on the subject of rights and natural law, makes clear the growth of his thinking from scripture: '[The Second Law of Nature] is that Law of the Gospel; *Whatsoever you require that others should do to you, that do ye to them*'. [Hobbes, T., *Leviathan*, (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 92.

⁴² Q21:107.

⁴³ Interview with Shaykh Yunus Dudhwala, 9th September 2010.

⁴⁴ Halal Food Authority, *Brief Guidelines for Halal Ovine, Bovine & Poultry Slaughter*, p. 6 (available: <http://www.halalfoodauthority.co.uk> [accessed 16th September 2010]).

⁴⁵ Interview with Masood Khawaja, 14th September 2010.

⁴⁶ <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn17972-animals-feel-the-pain-of-religious-slaughter.html> [accessed 17th September 2010].

⁴⁷ Grandin, T., *Discussion of Research that Shows that Kosher or Halal Slaughter without Stunning Causes Pain Discussion of research that shows that Kosher or Halal Slaughter without stunning causes pain*, 2010, <http://www.grandin.com/ritual/slaughter.without.stunning.causes.pain.html> [accessed 17th September 2010].

⁴⁸ Grandin, T., *Maintaining Acceptable Animal Welfare during Kosher or Halal Slaughter*, <http://www.grandin.com/ritual/maintain.welfare.during.slaughter.html> [accessed 17th September 2010].

⁴⁹ Gregory, N.G. and Wotton, S.B., *Sheep Slaughtering Procedures – II: Time to Loss of Brain Responsiveness after Exsanguination or Cardiac Arrest Sheep slaughtering procedures – II: Time to loss of brain responsiveness after exsanguination or cardiac arrest* (British Veterinary Journal, 1984a), 140: 354-260, <http://www.grandin.com/ritual/kosher.box.variables.time.lose.sensibility.html> [accessed 17th September 2010].

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⁵¹ For a detailed discussion, see: Ibn Adam al-Kawthari, M., *Machine-slaughtered Meat*, http://qa.sunnipath.com/issue_view.asp?id=2938 [accessed 15th September 2010].

⁵² http://www.meatinfo.co.uk/news/fullstory.php/aid/10171/UK_Muslim_scholars_reject_mechanical_slaughtering_A0.html [accessed 17th September 2010].

⁵³ Interview with Shaykh Yunus Dudhwala, 9th September 2010.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ http://www.meatradenewsdaily.co.uk/news/300610/european_union_new_labelling_laws_for_halal_meat_0.aspx [accessed 1st September 2010].

⁵⁶ Mufti Muhammad ibn Adam disputes this conclusion, arguing that everything can be automated except the moment of slaughter itself and thus the same speed can be matched as the fixed machine blade. This suggestion no doubt deserves investigation within the UK. However, it seems hard to escape the conclusion that the number of slaughtermen that would need to be employed to consistently perform 100 correct chicken slaughters a minute over an entire working day would inevitably push up the costs quite considerably. This is implicitly recognised by the HMC in the figure of 5-10p quoted above, which is a bigger figure than the 1p per item, which is claimed for the inspection and certification system itself. See: Ibn Adam al-Kawthari, M., *Machine-slaughtered Meat*, http://qa.sunnipath.com/issue_view.asp?id=2938 [accessed 15th September 2010]; <http://www.halalmc.net/faq/faq.html#2> [accessed 19th September 2010].

⁵⁷ http://www.burnleyexpress.net/news/local-news/halal_meat_protest_outside_colne_kfc_1_1696190 [accessed 4th August 2011].

⁵⁸ <http://halalfocus.net/2010/04/18/kfc%E2%80%99s-uk-%E2%80%98halal-trial%E2%80%99-put-on-trial%E2%80%A6and-found-guilty/> [accessed 4th August 2011]; <http://halalfocus.net/2010/04/18/uk-kfc-chickens-do-not-fulfil-lcm-halal-criteria/> [accessed 4th August 2011].

⁵⁹ See the interviews in the appendices.

⁶⁰ For instance, see the following internet forum threads: <http://www.sunniforum.com/forum/showthread.php?46726-Exposing-the-HFA-Halal-Meat-Game-in-UK> [accessed 4th August 2011]; <http://www.turntoislam.com/forum/showthread.php?t=68778> [accessed 4th August 2011].

⁶¹ This logo can be found in the appendices.

⁶² Interview with Masood Khawaja, 14th September 2010.

⁶³ HFA was particularly involved in Statutory Instrument No 1999/400, which has already been referenced. Ibid.

⁶⁴ <http://www.halalfoodauthority.co.uk/aboutus.html> [accessed 19th September 2010].

⁶⁵ Interview with Masood Khawaja, 14th September 2010.

⁶⁶ Sajjad, Mufti M., *HFA or HMC?*, <http://www.as-suffa.org/Food/Halal-or-Haram/hfa-or-hmc.html> [accessed 18th September 2010].

⁶⁷ Interview with Masood Khawaja, 14th September 2010. He mentions here four Islamic schools of thought. Deobandi and Barelvi refers to those with a link to the famous Sunni seminaries of Deoband and Bareilly in India. Ahl al-Hadith is often equivalent to Salafi, and refers to the group's emphasis in turning directly to the *ahadith* (prophetic traditions) for guidance in Islamic law, rather than through the traditional scholarship of the orthodox schools of jurisprudence (*madhahib*). Akhbari Shiah refers to a branch of the Twelver Shiah who emphasise *hadith* and reject *ijtihad*, which in some regards parallels the Ahl al-Hadith in the broader Sunni sphere. Today, they are very much a minority group even within the Shiah.

⁶⁸ At the time of writing this has 2,280 members, <http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=3387255088&ref=ts> [accessed 19th September 2010]; for a testimonial on the consultation with scholars, see: Sajjad, Mufti M., *HFA or HMC?*, <http://www.as-suffa.org/Food/Halal-or-Haram/hfa-or-hmc.html> [accessed 18th September 2010].

⁶⁹ Interview with Shaykh Yunus Dudhwala, 9th September 2010.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ http://www.halalmc.net/about_hmc/hmc_system.html, [accessed 19th September 2010].

⁷² http://www.halalmc.net/resources/other_slaughter_articles/001_fiqh_of_halal_meat.html, [accessed 19th September 2010].

⁷³ http://www.halalmc.net/about_hmc/slaughter_criteria.html, [accessed 19th September 2010].

⁷⁴ This is to be found on the HMC logo, which is reproduced in the appendices.

⁷⁵ Interview with Masood Khawaja, 14th September 2010.

⁷⁶ HMC is present in a number of locations within the UK and is generally strongest represented in areas with high Muslim populations: London, the Midlands and the previous industrial towns in the North of England. However, from the information available on the website, only four towns and cities have a large number (10 or more) HMC certified butchers: London, Leicester, Birmingham and Blackburn, many others have only one or two, while Wales, Northern Ireland and the Southwest, as well as other towns in England and Scotland have none. The number of restaurant and takeaway outlets certified by HMC nationwide passed the 400 mark in October 2010. <http://www.halalmc.net>; http://www.halalmc.net/news_events/news.html [accessed 13th May 2011].

⁷⁷ <http://www.halalmc.net/faq/faq.html#5> [accessed 19th September 2010].

⁷⁸ http://www.halalmc.net/certified_outlets/certified_butchers_london.html#eastlondon [accessed 19th September 2010]. There are some with NW, SW, and TW, however.

⁷⁹ Sajjad, Mufti Mohammed, *HFA or HMC?*, <http://www.as-suffa.org/Food/Halal-or-Haram/hfa-or-hmc.html> [accessed 18th September 2010].

⁸⁰ Interview with Shaykh Yunus Dudhwala, 9th September 2010.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Interview with Masood Khawaja, 14th September 2010.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Interview with Shaykh Yunus Dudhwala, 9th September 2010.

⁸⁵ Interview with Masood Khawaja, 14th September 2010.

⁸⁶ Q21:107.

⁸⁷ Q6:121.

⁸⁸ ‘*Shahadah*’ here and in the following discussion has the same meaning as *tasmiyah*.

⁸⁹ Q5:3.

⁹⁰ ‘Whence slaughtering is carried out in a mechanised plant, say for, poultry slaughtering, because of expediency of machinery and fixed blade operation, licensed Muslim slaughterman/men should be present to do the rendition of *shahadah*. Number of slaughtermen depends on the speed of the machine/line. Generally it is accepted that a healthy young male can recite *shahadah* approximately fifteen hundred times per hour. It is therefore, suggested that we have 2-3 Muslim slaughtermen at the slaughtering station/s of medium abattoirs. These slaughtermen would also slaughter with full recitation of *shahadah* any bird/animal that are missed by the machine.’ Source: <http://www.halalfoodauthority.co.uk>, [accessed 19th September 2010].

⁹¹ See footnote 59.

⁹² Q49:6: ‘Believers, if a troublemaker brings you news, check it first, in case you wrong others unwittingly and later regret what you have done.’

⁹³ Q9:60: ‘Alms are meant only for the poor, the needy, those who administer them, those whose hearts need winning over, to free slaves and help those in debt, for God’s cause, and for travellers in need. This is ordained by God; God is All Knowing and Wise.’

⁹⁴ Q16:125.

⁹⁵ Presumably he means the Association of Halal Certifiers, Europe (AHC) and the World Halal Council (WHC) both of which are listed on the Halal Food Authority website.

⁹⁶ Presumably he is referring to Q16:125 again: ‘Argue with them in the most courteous way.’

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APPENDICES

Questions Prepared for the Interviews with HFA and HMC Representatives

- WHAT do you think it means to the average Muslim to see your certificate?
- WHAT is your view of the many halal shops without any certification?
- WHAT is your advice to the public if a non-certified shop is their closest and most convenient?
- WHAT is your take on the issue of stunning as a religious and ethical issue?
- WHAT is your take on mechanical slaughter as a religious issue, and as a matter of necessity, or mere convenience?
- WHAT kind of issues do you feel arise from the presence of different certifying organisations in the UK?
- WHAT do you think of working towards a single, enforceable national standard for halal?
- HOW would you describe your vision for the future of halal meat in the UK?

TRANSCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW WITH SHAYKH YUNUS DUDHWALA

9 September 2010

RH (Ramon Harvey): What do you think it means to the average Muslim (on the street) to see your certificate, whether in a butcher or in a take-away of some sort? What do you think the meaning of the HMC is to the average Muslim?

YD (Yunus Dudhwala): I think that if a Muslim is not aware of the halal industry, the problems with halal certification – so if that is the definition of an “average Muslim” – then I would have to say it wouldn’t make much of a difference. Because he would not be aware of that industry, the problems in the halal industry, the problems of halal certification...

RH: Right. And if someone was more aware of the sort of things you are mentioning, and had more knowledge about the halal industry in the UK, what would the difference be to that Muslim?

YD: I think it would make a huge difference to anyone who was more aware of the problems, which are currently within the halal industry, and within halal certification. I think those who understand that there are problems, they would be extremely particular in trying to source a HMC outlet. In my opinion they would feel HMC is the strictest halal certification body and the most cautious halal certification body in the UK currently.

RH: Thank you. That’s useful. So given that context, what would your view be of the many halal shops that have no sort of certification? They

just say, “We are a halal shop”, whether they are a butcher or... I’m not asking you to say whether they meet standards of halal or not, but what is your view of this in the current climate in the UK?

YD: It would help the Muslim community a great deal if the majority or if all of these outlets within the UK could come under some kind of certification body. Also the actual certification body needs to be audited and scrutinised by maybe the MCB (the Muslim Council of Britain) that’s the next step, at the moment, as it is, the outlets, the butchers out there...it help the Muslim community a great deal in making an informed choice when buying from halal shops throughout the country.

RH: What about if people were in an area where there was no certified shop? Or if the closest and most convenient shop is a non-certified shop and it would be more difficult for them to get further afield?

YD: Then they should buy from the nearest halal shop. You cannot force somebody to try and find a shop that is certified by a certification body. They have got to do the best to their ability. If somebody doesn’t have any (certified) halal shops and they want a halal shop, then that would be the best to buy from. If somebody has halal shops, and one is certified by a certification body that is trusted, then I would recommend that they go to the trusted halal shop that is certified by a certification body...(but otherwise) still go and buy from them, that’s the best they can do, you’ve got to obey Allah as much as you can. And this is different in different situations.

RH: OK. Moving the issues on very slightly, obviously there are a couple of big issues that come up within the criteria for certification. And the first of these is the issue of (animal) stunning. I would like to get your opinion on stunning first as a religious issue, within the *din* (faith and way of life). Also, secondly as an ethical issue [connected with animal welfare], this is in regards to some of the recent comments being made. I’m sure you are aware of, that some people in the wider community regard unstunned meat as being unethical due to the humaneness of the slaughter. So can you give me your opinion on that?

YD: From a religious perspective, if an animal is stunned, then according to the majority of the scholars, this act of stunning is *makruh* (disliked). And there are different levels of detestability in *makruh*, and the majority of the scholars I have read consider the act of stunning to be *makruh tahrimi* (detestable and close to forbidden). But if the animal is still alive after that stunning and is slaughtered while alive, then the animal is halal. But because of the act being *makruh tahrimi*, and also because of the pain of that this stun gives to the animal, and also because there is a chance of the animal dying of the stun especially the smaller animals...for these reasons the Halal Monitoring Committee does not accept stunning prior to slaughter.

RH: Yes.

YD: In terms of the ethical perspective, I think the studies are very inconclusive in terms of what is more humane for the animal or not. What we believe as Muslims is '*wa ma arsalnaka illa rahmatan lil-alamin*', We did not send you, O Prophet, except as a mercy to all of mankind, including all of the worlds, including the animal worlds.⁸⁶ And the Prophet Muhammad (*salla allahu alayhi wa sallam*) showed us how to kindly and humanely slaughter animals. Now we feel that that is the best method for the animal, when it is cut with a sharp knife, a very very sharp knife, and it is cut at the jugular veins and the veins are made to bleed. But we feel that if there was a better way of doing it, the Prophet (*salla allahu alayhi wa sallam*) also could have stunned the animal by hitting it with a stone, or with something else at the time, but this was considered to be cruel.

And therefore we feel that this is the most humane method that has been shown not by the Prophet (*salla allahu alayhi wa sallam*), but also the *shechita* method also within the Jewish faith, it was used by Prophet Moses (*alayhi al-salatu wa al-salam*). So it has been [inaudible] according to all the prophets, so we feel it is the most humane method.

RH: OK. Thank you very much. What is your take on the issue of mechanical slaughter? This is again from the religious perspective first of all, and also in regards to the demand for meat that we obviously do

have within the community. Is it possible that it is a necessity in these times? Do you think that (argument) holds up?

YD: Again from a religious perspective, from what I've read and I am a religious scholar, but I think there are more qualified religious scholars than I am in this field, and therefore I have done a lot of reading in this area, and from what I understand, there are quite a few problems within mechanical slaughter. Number one: the slaughterman who is pushing the button, and then hundreds of thousands of chickens are slaughtered. From what I have read, there is a separation between the person who is slaughtering and the act of slaughter, if the slaughterman does not have the blade that is slaughtering. This separation is problematical from a religious perspective, from a *fiqhi* (jurisprudential) perspective according to several of the previous *fatawa*, the *fatawa* of (Ibn Abidin) al-Shami I think. It is mentioned that if a person is slaughtering an animal, and he does not say '*bismillahi allahu akbar*' and the next person is walking past him and he says '*bismillahi allahu akbar*', the animal will still not be halal, because the person who has said the *tasmiyah* has got nothing to do with the slaughter. And I think this scenario is very similar to where the person is saying the *tasmiyah*, and yet he is not connected to doing the slaughter with his own hand. And number two, the *tasmiyah* is a problem because in some methodologies, there is only one *tasmiyah* for 70, 80, 90, 100...200,000 animals. In the Qur'an, Allah mentions that 'Do not eat that which has not had the name of God pronounced upon it' and because 'upon it' is '*alayhi*' (upon it in the singular form) the majority of scholars believe that it should be upon every single animal.⁸⁷

RH: Uh-huh.

YD: The other method that is being used is the button is being pushed, and there are people apparently standing on the side who are saying, '*bismillahi allahu akbar*', '*bismillahi allahu akbar*', '*bismillahi allahu akbar*'. Again the first problem is that they are not connected to the slaughter, number two is there is a very, very big unlikelihood that the intention for every single animal is being met and their speed is being kept up with the speed of the blade. It's very, very unlikely that's happening, and therefore again a '*tasmiyah*' is being missed out. So these problems exist within the

mechanical slaughter according to the majority of the scholars of the world from what I understand. Malaysia had mechanical slaughter within its criteria for slaughtering, but they took it out and now they do not have that as an acceptable method of slaughter, although in practice I think it does happen. So it's a very controversial method, and as a Muslim community where the majority doesn't accept that method, I think that for a certification body who is putting on a certificate without portraying the criteria of the animal to show it (has been) mechanically slaughtered, if the majority in the community do not accept mechanical slaughter, the certification body should not use that method, because it is a very controversial method and is not accepted by the majority.

RH: OK. Thank you. My second question is, with this mechanical slaughter, however, does that mean that Muslims should reduce their meat intake? Do you think it is possible to supply...?

YD: I forgot to answer that question. I think most Muslims should reduce their meat intake. Red meat intake is far far more than what it is supposed to be. And also, we eat a lot of chicken as well, so I think our meat intake is far more than it's supposed to be from a health perspective.

And also I think... Even if there is large production of halal going on, it might push up the cost by 5p or 10p [per chicken] by employing people to do the slaughter, but I don't think that should stop us from implementing the *shariah* principles of slaughter. The *shariah* principles of slaughter should come first...and if the majority consensus of scholars agree that this method does conform to the Islamic criteria of slaughter, then it can be considered, but at the moment, the majority of scholars... in fact at least 95% of scholars in this country do not agree with this method, so I think it should not be employed until we get the consensus on this issue.

RH: OK. What kind of issues do you feel arise from the presence of different certification organisations in the UK?

YD: In a word: confusion. People are confused, and I think it's sad that there has to be two or three certification bodies. Not that there can't be

two or three certification bodies, but I think there is a lot of confusion in the community...and this is why the HMC prefers...whether it is the HMC or any other body who is certified, to go with the criteria which is

accepted by the people. Because they are walking in blind, they are looking at a certificate, they don't know the criteria... and whether they are followers of that criteria or not. The certification bodies should take that responsibility and think; this community in this area do not follow this criteria, or do not accept mechanical slaughter therefore so we shouldn't put this certificate here, because people will be thinking that this is not mechanical slaughter, and...we are taking that responsibility... so it does add confusion.

But it is also a benefit for those people who are informed to make an informed choice. So those people who are well into halal, know the problems of the industry, it helps them make an informed choice where to buy their (halal) meat and poultry and 'chicken and chips'.

RH: Yeah. Sure. What do you think about the idea of trying to get a single, enforceable standard for halal within the UK. Is that possible?

YD: It's...wishful thinking, maybe. It's an idea but...I don't think it's going to happen. I don't know...I think what needs to happen is a body like the MCB audit and monitor the certification bodies and they put out a report, or they publish on their website information about what the different bodies stand for, what are their criteria, so it becomes clear for the whole Muslim community, from an independent, recognised Muslim body who then audits the certification bodies...because at the moment confusion arises as there are some certification bodies in there for money, there are some certification bodies that are genuine, there are some certification bodies that are both benefitting for the community and benefitting for themselves. So I think there needs to be transparency somewhere at a higher level that will give the community confidence, so it is not only the certification body saying that "this is what we do", it should be an outside body which is independent and transparent.

RH: OK. Why do you think that the Muslim community has such a difficulty in gaining a single standard for Halal? Obviously in comparison to the Jewish community, who do seem to have a single standard for their kosher meats?

YD: I think it goes back to history, because the Muslim community never controlled its halal market from a certification perspective until very late on, and by that time the octopus, the tentacles of the octopus had spread wide, and therefore trying to gather them and trying to get them under control is near impossible.

And that's what's happened and then you've got the certification bodies that have been established for a long time and they have gone on to change their criteria to what it is now. And then there are other certification bodies that don't agree with that criteria, who are coming along and saying "No, that is wrong and this is right"...and I think because of that it is difficult until people start to follow the opinion of scholars. So they will say OK, we will sit down with these scholars, we are confident of the opinion of these scholars, and whatever criteria they come up with we will be happy with. At the moment our agency is happy to do that. Our agency (Halal Monitoring Committee) has always been scholarly lead...I don't think other certification bodies want to have the scholars' input.

RH: Right. So you think the place of the scholars is key...

YD: Yeah, I really do. Actually I think the UK needs a body of scholars to come together on the halal issue, and they need to decide which way...and the body of scholars have to be recognised by (obviously) the certification bodies and by the people. And then if we can get to that stage, again that's going to be difficult in itself, then the Muslim (community) may be able to move on and set a standard criteria.

RH: OK. That's great. The last question I have for you today is apart from what you have already said just now, is there anything else you would like to add for your vision for the future of halal meat in the UK?

YD: Oh gosh...I think the certification body should not ignore the industry, should not ignore technology. But the technology and the industry should be subservient to the laws of *shariah*.

And I think this is where the HMC stands at the moment, and we are open to dialogue with scholars and with certification bodies to reach a standard that is acceptable to all of the Muslim community and the majority of those scholars in the UK.

I hope we can get to that stage where some scholars do sit down and take this issue by the scruff of the neck and deal with it in terms of setting a standard that is acceptable by the majority of the scholars in the UK, which is accepted by all the certification bodies.

RH: Umm...something just occurred to me, which (really) will be the last question. Do you feel in terms of the general population – obviously you have been talking about the scholars, and at the same time you have been talking about the average people and their standard of halal – do you feel there could be a disjoint between the masses and their understanding and then this understanding that is held by the scholars?

YD: I think there can be, but if there is unity and a uniform of approach in terms of standard it could take out the confusion. At the moment an average individual would say “well it says halal, the responsibility is not on me, it’s on the person who is selling me halal”. But I think the responsibility is on both of them. The responsibility is on the consumer, and the responsibility is on the outlet who is selling the halal. And we as a Muslim community need to take a responsibility for those outlets that are portraying ‘halal’ signs, and they are not halal. There are some that are definitely not halal. There are some that might not be halal. And there are some that don’t know whether they are halal or not...So we need to filter out, or we need to clean up the industry from a general Muslim perspective to help the Muslim consumers, so that when they are thinking that the responsibility is on the outlet, by that time, hopefully the problems will have been solved in the outlet and they can eat with confidence.

RH: OK. That's great. Thank you very, very much for your help and for your comments today. It's very beneficial, and I will email you when it [the research] is further along in a couple of weeks.

TRANSCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW WITH MASOOD KHAWAJA

14 September 2010

RH (Ramon Harvey): The first question is what do you think it means to the average Muslim to see your certificate, the HFA certificate, in a butcher or in a take-away? What value does that have to the average Muslim?

MK (Masood Khawaja): *Bismillah al-rahman al-rahim*, the average Muslim when he sees the Halal Food Authority logo, he doesn't discern that for the last 16 years Halal Food Authority has been accrediting and authenticating and endorsing meat and foodstuffs throughout the chain. And giving that authenticity that it has been seen, not only from the Islamic *shariah* point of view, but also from the point of view of hygiene, food safety, environmental health and especially (that) it has the compliance of what you would call EU regulation. Previously it used to be the regulation of ministry of agriculture or DEFRA, whereas now everything in the UK is covered by EU laws. So not every Muslim thinks that, yes, it has been seen to be complying with whatever regulations there are. Having said that, previously what it was that Muslims used to think, for example in the slaughtering thing, that if a Muslim slaughters a lamb, sheep or a chicken that that becomes halal. That is not the case. Halal means permissible, meaning wholesome, pure and fit for human consumption. So our emphasis for the sake of Muslims, for the sake of giving this particular message, which I illustrated to you just now, is that it is not only in compliance with the *shariah*, but in compliance with the hygiene as well. Packaging and labelling as well. It complies with all the

environmental health issues as well...Yes, it has been seen to be so contractually. Because we introduce a contract in this deal, so that anybody that wants to start a halal slaughterhouse or halal distribution section or wants to manufacture or process any food products that are halal, has to enter into agreements. Every Muslim, *al-hamdu lillah*, shares this with us to say that it has been seen and audited and complied with.

RH: OK. Thank you. So given that context, what is your view of the many halal shops that have no sort of certification at all? What do you feel about these shops or do you have an opinion on these shops?

MK: Well you see our food authority has done one thing really unique. We don't go and knock at the door of the establishment to say: "Have your product or have your meat and chicken Halal authenticated by us". For that reason what we have done is that whosoever is the main producer, say the slaughterhouses, say the distinguishing section or the cutting plant as they are called, that they come to us, we sort of endorse their meat because there are two reasons for this; one – it means that we are endorsing the source of the meat, bovine meat or chicken, that doesn't matter, but it means the source. From the slaughterhouse, it goes to the cutting plant to be portioned, from there it goes to distribution and from there to the shops.

MK: When we started, we started looking at shops, but I think shops have to be controlled by – and this is who we left it to – the trading standards people. In the UK we have a law of trading standards for description. Or labelling. So they are the people if a shop does any kind of misdemeanour or the shop does any kind of mixing of any meat or things, then they are answerable to trading standards people. Who are in turn (answerable to) environmental health people, those are in turn regulated by the councils, who are regulated by the food standards agency, and so on.

So I think because of that, I'm glad to say [inaudible] have happened. It used to be that anybody could open a shop and say it was halal. But now because the environmental health and trading standards people are roaming around and monitoring, these things are not yet under strict

control, but people are aware that they can't put a sticker on their shops unless and until they can prove the traceability in the chain there.

RH: Uh-huh. So in this case where their shop does say 'halal', in your knowledge of the regulation of trading standards...what stops someone just putting 'halal', wherever it's from? How do we know it's been sorted in the correct way, that it really is genuine halal?

MK: Because the food standards agency and trading standards people work on the basis of the traceability from the origin. Origin meaning either slaughterhouse to the last plate, as it were. In the case of a butcher shop to a restaurant, the last but one stage before it comes to my plate. The reason that people are aware of this, that if they put a sign to say they are halal, and they cannot give you the traceability of it (or cannot give the environmental health officers nor the trading standards persons the traceability of the thing)... because sometimes you will see the restaurants or the butchery shops have got licenses signed by the HFA, or by any other endorsing body. Sometimes you find they have the traceability of their meat, to say ABC slaughterhouse HFA endorsement for their products, right? So what you will find in some of the restaurants as well is that traceability because they are getting the meat from that slaughterhouse, and there will be a copy of that license displaying in there to say that...according to ABC our meat is halal. So if the trading standards person comes in and he (or she) finds out that the traceability isn't there, meaning that they are using uncertified meat or poultry that they can't substantiate from the invoices, then they are in trouble. And they have to be answerable, so I think the system is working as much as possibly it can.

RH: Yeah.

MK: Still there is room for improvement. The improvement would come in because the majority of halal selling outlets are Muslim outlets, and their owners are Muslims and the majority of those doing the halal trade, halal meat and food manufacturing are actually non-Muslims. But that's where the Halal Food Authority has introduced the contract so that they are aware of what halal is, and also it facilitates the Halal Food Authority

to do the audits as well. Because we, as I said earlier, we try to do the origins [inaudible] from the processing centres to the distribution section...that way we have control much more in there. Obviously there is always room for improvement in things, and *in sha allah* we have made in 16 years 'halal' a buzzword in the UK, and *al-hamdu lillah*, we are still working so that the Muslims learn the trade over here, what is halal, how it is halal. I'll give you an example of that. That in the halal trade, it is not [just] the way the meat is slaughtered, it is not that at all. That is one factor of it, but what [the other] factors should be as I mentioned to you [are] about hygiene, about food safety, environmental and traceability as well. But at the same time, we have to look at these things to say, "This is a halal restaurant". But I question that halal restaurant, simply because they have got an alcohol license there. Right? Now, I for one would say at the Halal Food Authority that we are not working with those restaurants. They can have the certificate advisors for their meat. But I am very reluctant to call it a halal restaurant, simply because halal means (as I said) pure, wholesome, and fit for Muslim and human consumption. It is not fit for me to go (where alcohol is served). That's why our next campaign is this, that we should have these halal outlets. And we have proven that now, when we started a halal outlet negotiation with Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) – it took me two and a half years to convince them, look, in your halal outlets we will not have pork and pork kind [inaudible], because this is the first in European history that a KFC 'halal' outlet does not have any pork at all. We salute KFC to say at least they have done that. We have done auditing of their chicken meat, their products and processes right here to Argentina, Brazil, Thailand, Holland, Denmark and everywhere – they are pretty happy with it. But these things have to be done in the halal restaurant owned by Muslims as well. Because you see after all, alcohol is an intoxicant, which Allah said, it is one of those things he says, "Keep away from it". So why is it that the Muslim restaurant and the halal Asian restaurant or the Tandoori restaurant have 2-3% of their turnover as alcohol? Why can't they actually remove that from the menu? That's what we are concentrating on, and I think it's important to understand halal means that our [inaudible] should be halal. Our behaviour should be halal. Our concept should be halal and permissible.

RH: Can I just ask a quick clarification? When you are saying that 80-85% are not actually Muslim controlled or owned, are these in general employing Muslim slaughtermen?

MK: Indeed that is a very good question of yours. Halal Food Authority insisted that when we came to the final slaughtering room, which is called welfare of animal killing and slaughtering room 1999-400, which was suggested by Masood Khawaja (yours truly), what we said was that the halal slaughtering either it could only be done in the supervision or under command of the veterinary surgeon and only done by a licensed Muslim slaughterman. A licensed Muslim slaughterman is much more important there, because I know you will realise that if you were not Muslim you could do the slaughtering yourself, but I think the pronunciation and the rendition of *shahadah* which would have been done at that time would not have been from the bottom of your heart. Are you with me now?

RH: Yes. I understand.

MK: That is the point, which we have brought in, you can rely (on the fact that) in a Halal Food Authority slaughterhouse, that we have a licensed Muslim slaughterman, and he is licensed by the meat hygiene service, which is part of the food standards agency. And then we actually monitor on their form what kind of Islamic notion they have, we say, "What do you recite at the time of *shahadah*? Do you believe in the last Prophet? Do you believe in all the fundamentals of Islam?" And things of that kind. That's the time when we see he knows the basis of Islam.

RH: Right.

MK: To have Muslim slaughtermen there is very important. To have them trained by the veterinary surgeon because then he would know the animal welfare. Then he would know what hygiene is. [Example of poor hygiene in a butcher shop is given, where a cut finger can make a mince product Haram]. Not only a mission to create awareness in the non-Muslims, we are creating awareness in the Muslims as well...to make something halal and permissible for ourselves.

RH: Thank you. To clarify again, so you are saying obviously with the HFA you are making sure there is a licensed Muslim slaughterman. But in the more general industry that does exist, are you saying there is obviously meat that is being labelled as halal and sold as halal, but it's not being slaughtered by Muslims? That's happening?

MK: That as I said to you would (should) not be done, even if someone is committing it. It's like parking your car on a double-yellow line, isn't it? But if a trading standards person checks the traceability, and finds otherwise a prosecution would occur.

RH: Right, so it could be happening, but...officially...

MK: It would be like applying the traffic law, if you are jumping the traffic light you will be caught.

RH: Right. I understand.

MK: So the traceability is there. What I would like to mention is this is how we do the traceability of meat and poultry and everything else. You see, *al-hamdu lillah* we have achieved that, and the animal's feet have been looked at as well. The animal's hygiene has been looked at as well. The animal's welfare has been looked at as well. What we (have) got to look at each time we talk about halal, we talk about the slaughtering methodology et cetera. Do you know on the halal side we have to move forwards now? What the Halal Food Authority is saying is that we should apply science and technology into these things and look at these things, not only meat and food-borne diseases for Muslims or the people who eat halal meat. What we have to look for the future, actually bringing cloned meat, cloned milk and cloned things in there. We know we have had intensive farming.

RH: Hmm. I think the questions I'm going to ask will come on to those sort of issues that you want to raise. So, if it's OK, I'll move on...

MK: Ah-hah. OK.

RH: There is the obvious issue of (animal) stunning, and I'd like you to give me your stance on stunning as a religious issue, because there have

been issues that people have raised. And also as an ethical issue connected with animal welfare, which also (has caused) quite a lot of disagreements...

MK: Right.

RH: You are aware of these issues, so if you give me your take on those two issues, that would be very beneficial.

MK: That's a very good question. Why? Because we must understand (what) Allah is asking us when we talk about halal and *dhibah* meat (slaughtered according to the Islamic *dhabh* procedure). You see, people confuse the word *dhibah* with halal. Halal is permissible, while *dhibah* is a method of slaughtering. Right?

RH: Yes.

MK: Now similarly in kosher, now kosher means permissible and *shechita* is the way it is made permissible for the Jewish people, [the] *Ahl al-Kitab* (People of the Book).

RH: Yup.

MK: In the *dhibah* there are three things required. One, carrion is prohibited and two, the flowing blood has to be stopped – we cannot eat the flowing blood. Third, a Muslim has to do the *niyyah* (intention) of *shahadah* – he doesn't do the slaughtering in any other name but Allah's name.⁸⁸

RH: Yes.

MK: Everything a Muslim does, he does in the name of Allah. Now, if the animal dies prior to slaughter, then it cannot be *dhibah* at all. If all the flowing blood (which is called the *dam masfuh*) is not drained from the body, or the carcass of the animal, it cannot be halal and can't be proposed as *dhibah*.

RH: Yup.

MK: If a Muslim doesn't do the rendition of the *shahadah: bismillahi allah akbar*, then it can't be (*dhibah*). So these three things we have talked about, keep in our mind these are the Qur'anic injunctions.⁸⁹

RH: Yes.

MK: Now the summary is this: the slaughtering person uses a sharp knife and four times the size of the neck; and one animal does not see the other animal being slaughtered. Then we have to understand that (although the) Qur'an is a scientific book – no matter how much we say that [Allah's] wisdom is scientific, it's not scientific as proved in a lab. What is science? It is something you see, observe and put in motion. Isn't it?

RH: Yes.

MK: So in exactly the same way, up to about 25 years (ago) even in England, even in the UK slaughtering was done by hand. Because it was not that much when I came here 49 years ago...the slaughtering of even chickens was done by hand for Muslims here, because it was a very, very low volume as such. And even slaughterhouses in the UK were doing a very low volume for Muslims. Now, what has happened is that the expediency of machinery came in. Just like the intensive farming I mentioned earlier. Who made intensive farming permissible for Muslims? Everybody knows it is not that kind of production system, which Allah allows [specifically tells] us to do. But...[inaudible] says in the Qur'an so we have applied our brain to say how we can achieve more. So at the same time, it used to be done on a cradle here in the UK. And for chicken it used to be the cone system, a chamber with five holes in it. They used to slaughter the chicken and insert the head of the chicken in there, so that the body used to be on top and the head used to be at the bottom (towards) the floor and all the draining used to be done.

So that was the procedure at the time, but the expediency of the machinery came in. So what we have to understand is that we can [use it as long as] we can comply and put the same three rules which I mentioned to you earlier: the animal is not dead prior to slaughter, and all the flowing

blood can be drained out, and a Muslim does the rendition of the *shahadah*. So we cannot see why we cannot apply science and technology

RH: Uh-huh.

MK: Science and technology is applied...now the stunning word, which you used earlier, stunning is of three different kinds, it must be understood. Stunning is the word according to the dictionary, you can have a look to see what “to stun” means.

Stunning is of three different kinds: One is called Captive Bolt Stunning, which is used (mainly) on bovine animals.

RH: Yes.

MK: Actually a little cartridge is put to the head and the brain goes to pieces, et cetera, and then the slaughtering is done. That cannot be allowed as the animal is partially dead in a “not reversible” action.

RH: Yes.

MK: So it is not a reversible action, so technically the animal is dead. So we cannot use that (method) on there.

The second state is of gas stunning. Inert gases are mixed together, and the animal is given that. Mainly it used to be for pigs, but now it is being done for chickens as well. But the jury for us is out on that, because there are inert gases, which can be put in the vestibule, and still the animal or the bird would not die from it. But we are not saying it can be used...it is not used by Halal Food Authority at the moment.

Now the third thing that is left is the electric stunning. Electric stunning is of two different kinds; one is dry stunning, like tong stunning, which is used on ovine animals [such as sheep]. A tong touches their forehead (on the side of the forehead) or right below where the kidneys are. [This] stunning does not change the colour, taste or texture of the meat. With stunning of this kind, the electricity can be controlled. Imagine a dimmer switch on your wall, if you go to the left...you will come to zero. If you go

to the right, you can increase the light as the current (increases). So what we say is that it is possible to control that to immobilise the animal only, so that the animal, after that, would do the convulsions so that the *dam masfuh* (the flowing blood) is drained out.

And also it doesn't injure its legs, doesn't injure its wings, in the case of a chicken. Sometimes you see the chicken leg, the drumsticks especially are bloodshot red. That is because the capillaries have been broken and the blood has spread from the capillaries to the meat itself. That should not be used because it is not hygienic to use. Sometimes you find the wings are broken...which many people do not know is not good for (consumption by) human beings.

So I think you can control that, but...yes, there is a section in our school of thought which says that slaughtering has to be done as it was done before. But for everything else they would apply science, they would hang the chicken, or animal upside down, but they would not apply that particular science. Reams of books are written on Qur'an and science, Qur'an and science, Qur'an and science, but they're not looking at science. They have a mobile telephone in their pocket all the time, but they're not looking at science that way.

There is a very important point here: it is not allowed, except that the authority or the representative in the slaughterhouse would confirm if the animal is dead, or is not dead, prior to slaughter. Who is it? The veterinary surgeon.

So he is the one that calibrates the electric current, so that the size of the animal, the weight of the animal is actually kept in mind prior to doing that. So that's why we say he is the one to switch on and off that calibrator, that stunner, so that the animal is surely not dying prior to slaughter...so this is why the Halal Food Authority is (much more importantly) of the opinion that we can use science but we can make it subservient, the science, to the Islamic injunctions.

RH: Yes. Ummm.

MK: ...and that can be done because in everything else, we are using science. I'll give you an example of that we can quote anywhere. In *Surah al-Hajj* (Q22:27), [God] says 'Come on weak (lean) camel or come on foot.'

RH: Yes.

MK: Now we are taking jumbo jets anyway, even from the African states. Because Allah has given us [the means] to make the journey quicker.

RH: Ummm. Ummm.

MK: [inaudible]...so science and technology can be used, but at the same time it *should* be used as if it is subservient to the Islamic dictum (of e.g.) bleeding – the animal is not dead prior to slaughter, and all the flowing blood is drained out *and* a Muslim does the rendition of the *shahadah*. Now the question comes in sometimes, in the expediency of the machinery, is every bird or animal when it is slaughtered by machine by this technological advancement...is actually when the blade touches the neck, that is to say a *shahadah* is being said? Yes, *al-hamdu lillah*, there is the *possibility* it is being said...the reason I say possibility is *not* an indication that it is not very common, but sometimes it can happen that two birds have got through on one rendition of the *shahadah*. But *al-hamdu lillah*, *thumma al-hamdu lillah* ...a Muslim or the required number of Muslims at that station standing there are saying *bismillahi allahu akbar* on that animal, on that bird...so for that machine, *al-hamdu lillah* we are satisfied that each and every slaughtering is done when Allah's name has been pronounced.⁹⁰

RH: Can I ask you particularly about stunning, do you feel there is a humane or an ethical issue here? Do you think the stunning has a benefit in terms of the humaneness of the slaughter?

MK: No, as a matter of fact that I would not put into the equation on behalf of Halal Food Authority.

RH: So that doesn't come into it?

MK: There are some who would actually say that stunning has been invented because of the humane slaughtering. That is totally wrong.

RH: What is the benefit of that?

MK: Let me explain that to you.

RH: Sure.

MK: If I had said to you that 20-25 years ago that stunning was not even in Britain where we live. Are we saying that the people who were owning the slaughterhouses, who were doing the slaughtering at the time, they were breaching the law of nature? Or law of the land, to say that they were doing inhumane slaughtering? No, because this is the expedience of machinery. Expedience of science, that's what I said to you, that the regulation is that stunning is not to kill the animal, or kill the bird. We would not do that, we would never do that, simply because...there is a slaughterhouse that is the number two chicken supplier in the UK, now what we have done is that we have 11 slaughtermen who have been licensed by us and by the meat hygiene service they work on rotation down there. Because there is (the) speed of the machine and the output is quite a lot. So what we are *not* saying is that only one slaughterman is required at the station. What we are saying is (that) the rendition has to match what the slaughtering speed is. Why do they go to these automations? Automation brings results, results are converted into trade surpluses or the turnover, if you like. We are saying to them, you can partake in halal slaughtering, you can have everything else in there (automated). Say, for example, the bleeding station is automated, the removing the feathers is automated, the other department that calls for evisceration that is automated, et cetera...But on the slaughtering station, according to the contract and agreement I mentioned earlier, have the insistence that we have that licensed slaughtermen standing there...I'm very much saddened when people say about the H.F.A. "Halal Food Authority slaughterhouses don't have Muslim slaughtermen". For God's sake, I was the one who suggested the law in there, that's why we have put it in there. But we are very honourable people, we do not do a rebuttal on that, all we do is this: we say what is Halal Food Authority's standard and

criteria of doing that? *This* is what it is. And then, *al-hamdu lillah*, we are satisfied that we are serving Muslims after all. You know as well as I that if a lamb is slaughtered, and eaten by 40 people, Allah would be accounting us for that because 40 different people would be eating something that is not halal. And that is a much bigger responsibility on our shoulders...the science has to be subservient to the Islamic dictum.

RH: Just to quickly clear up the stunning, before I move on to another question...

MK: Sure.

RH: (So are you saying) to make this clear, the benefit of the stunning helps with the expedience of the slaughter? Is that the benefit of the stunning, [for] that it is [to be] allowed?

MK: That is partly what it is. Also benefitting one way or the other to say that we have got nice clean hygienic meat produced.

RH: Ah, because they do not jerk around, and bring out the blood into the drumstick (which you were mentioning), and these aspects...?

MK: That's right.

RH: OK. So it has benefit in terms of the expediency and the cleanliness of the meat?

MK: Exactly. You must understand that electricity was not invented up to 200 years ago, we musn't make it that it is not *sunnah* [prophetic practice] to do that.

RH: I understand that.

MK: We musn't put any of our (thoughts) which are wrong. If in any form or manner the stunned meat slightly [inaudible] ...we say it immobilises the animal only. It doesn't change the colour, the taste, the texture of the meat or even the look of the meat. Right? I think if that is being done, that would mean we are complying. We musn't bring the

other aspects into the argument, saying, “It was not done at the time”. Even up to 200 years ago, what was being done? Even in European places, they used to have (chicken) cradles up to about 20 years ago.

RH: Yeah.

MK: ...Science and technology is improving that. In 1987-88, my telephone was a suitcase. Now my telephone, which is a mobile phone and I’m the very proud owner of an iPhone 4 now, right? It’s a small thing (containing) a whole library, isn’t it?

RH: Yeah.

MK: So what we have got to look at is this: that the Qur’anic injunctions are, the *hadiths* (prophetic traditions) are, we must have [inaudible], we must have hygiene in there and animal welfare in there, we must have that safety which actually brings that into (the) food chain. We must be insisting on hygiene, we must be insisting on environmental health. You know when I was a child (I’m 68)...my grandfather used to go out buying the animals, right? And they used to bring the animal about 2 weeks before home so they could feed that animal and make it fatter...but they used to see the teeth of the animal, see if there were any lacerations on the skin or anything, and they used to feel the animal and could tell if there was any kind of ailment or not...[inaudible]. But now we insist that any slaughterhouse – I was very proud to see in the slaughtering rules we put down, that no slaughtering will be done except in EU approved slaughterhouses – except with the supervision of the veterinary surgeon. Why a veterinary surgeon? Because he will look at the animal prior to slaughter, so (as to see) that it is permissible to slaughter this animal or not. He will look at the animal during slaughter, to see that all the compliance is being done about the animal welfare. Then he will see the post slaughter meat to see that it is fit for human consumption. So what is better? What is the best thing? The best thing is this... that halal, as I said earlier, means wholesome, pure and fit for human consumption.

RH: Can I ask you, obviously when you come into the issues of science and technology, which are a very important area, when you are dealing

with them for a Muslim community, as we know there is a great deal of authority in the eyes of the people with the religious scholars. Obviously that is an important part of the *din* (faith and way of life) as well. How do you work with the religious scholars, in terms of the sort of *ijtihad* (juridical reasoning) that you would need to have this signed off (in terms of religious authority)?

MK: We are very proud that we are not conceited people. Even from the beginning and inception of the Halal Food Authority, we have got a Muslim *ulama* board here.

RH: Right.

MK: We have got Deobandis in it, we've got Barelvis in it, we've got Ahl al-Hadith (People of the Traditions) in it, we've got even Akhbari Shiah in it.⁹¹

RH: Right.

MK: I have got an email on my screen since yesterday, (asking) "What *ulama* are there who are backing Halal Food Authority?" Mr. Harvey, if I say our arguments are from Deoband, they say why is it not Barelvi? If I say it is Barelvi, why is it not Ahl al-Hadith?

So we have that problematic thing in there.

RH: I understand.

MK: Look at it this way, Mr. Harvey [MK gives example of how the method of *salah* (ritual prayer) varies within different communities and schools of thought, but all are valid acts of worship.]

MK: It's the *niyyah* (intention) that counts, because we have so many schools of thought. And we always believe in one thing, no deviation for anybody (in terms of fundamental beliefs?). Thus if we put a *halukah* cap, you know the white cap, and we have longer beard and we wear a *thawb* (robe), it doesn't us make a Muslim, does it? What makes a Muslim is what our heart is saying, *in sha allah*. As I mentioned to you about

responsibility, the Halal Food Authority is the Muslim's organisation... And also what we want to see is this, when we all come together, is this 80-85% which is being given to us by non-Muslims...we have an agency in Pakistan and India and have been trying to work out an agency in Egypt and places like that as well, *in sha allah*, why? Because what we see down there is that the halal is in the name. In the name only, you see because 80-85% is exported from Europe to Pakistan.

RH: Umm.

MK: They eat more gelatine than we do here, who checks that gelatine by the way? This is what we are looking at in the Halal Food Authority. When we say we are looking at processed food, we are looking not only at the processed food (but) the ingredients of it. You know when we met K.F.C., which I mentioned to you earlier, my food (advisor) [inaudible] he said to me, when we looked at two hundred items which are in their shops he said, "What is this bottled water?" You never look at bottled water intensively, do you? But we were looking at it. So what we are saying is that we want to go down in there to say, "What are the ingredients? What are the enzymes? What are the constituents in there?" And also "Where are these being produced? How are these being produced? By whom are they being produced?" And then the same question comes up, we are saying *ma sha allah al-hamdu lillah* halal and the permissibility of that is according to Islamic *shariah* ... [inaudible] Do tell me one thing, these agencies like Food Standard Agencies use whole departments in there, what are they looking for? You see here, 1.7 million cattle were slaughtered only because of the fear that they might have foot and mouth. Right?

RH: Sure.

MK: What happens in India and Pakistan? If the disease comes like that, they say "Slaughter it before it dies".

RH: Um-hum.

MK: We don't want to go to that kind of regime. What we are looking for

is this: that Allah wants us eat (halal), to have the chain established in there right from the beginning. Many Muslims do not know this, that Allah is not only asking Muslims to eat halal meat, or halal species of the animal. Allah says to feed your animal (so this animal does not have any meat or anything of that kind). Right? So there is a rule for animal feed as well in the Qur'an and the Sunnah *al-hamdu lillah*. So what we have got to look at is this: that we live in a place, now we have made it home, we have to first apply the Islamic law, then see where Islamic law needs to be (a little bit) having support on this.

I have an International proposition to speak in a seminar. Let me read what I have written here: "This session should be publicised on an International basis" – I'm quoting here – "so that the public at large together with the worldwide industry could be made aware that halal does not only include the permissibility of foods from Muslims (in) according to the *shariah* rules. It also means that the understanding of food safety, hygiene, environment health and food and meat-borne diseases have to made mandatory for compliance both in the accreditation and trade of halal meat and food."

RH: Um-hum.

MK: That's the definition of this.

RH: *Ma sha allah*. Can I ask you just a couple more questions? What kind of issues do you think arise from the presence of different certification organisations in the UK?

MK: Ah...Mr. Harvey, that's a very good question. We welcomed one or two organisations when we came into being...because we said at the time in the Halal Food Authority that we have not checked everything. There are over 55,000 companies which produce different kinds of foodstuffs ...different kinds of meat, different kinds of everything else because advancement is always there. Where we are a little bit concerned at the moment is, say for example, there used to be a slaughterhouse somewhere in Gloucester, when we started to put them on the route of halal slaughtering and halal trade in there, I trained some Muslim

slaughtermen there. Now the chief slaughterman, who was at the time trained by us, he is now doing (halal) authentication. That's where we take a little pause in there to say, "Is it necessary for this person to do that?" If he is doing it in the manner with full responsibility, full traceability, full agreements and audits and everything then it's fine. But if he's only doing that just because he's doing the slaughtering here, what goes into it and how do they monitor these things? How do they actually do that? And every third person cannot actually start becoming *mufti* (jurisconsult) of things, or becoming authenticators of things. In 2007 we had a conference in America, where I said the Muslim Associations like ours are becoming authenticators, the Muslims are becoming consumers. We are not producers of the meat and food items, it is being done by the other side of industry, which actually is commended. But I think we should be able to do our share of it, and we should be able to regularise this and monitor it. We should have an association of associations in there to say Halal Food Authority, A.B.C. organisation, Bejwari organization...we should work together on that. Just like we do aspire sometimes to say "Oh, look at Jewish methodology they have got five different organisations to monitor their very small kosher trade. Right?"

RH: Ummm...

MK: But, they do have differences, many people don't know, even today there are differences, just as Muslims have. The one I mentioned to you about Ahl al-Hadith, Deobandis and Barelvis. They have the same thing, but what happens is this; they do not fight outside their four walls.

RH: Ah-hah.

MK: Muslims actually attack each other outside the four walls. But let me give you an example of that, without putting a name to it. After the Halal Food Authority accreditation of Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), there was so much aversion created from a certain Northern organization that it was impossible to believe.

RH: Um-hum.

MK: We did not give the rebuttal, all we did was (to) put what the Halal Food Authority does. They claimed, “They do stunning, they have no Muslim slaughtermen in there, they have no auditors in there, they have no this, they have no that...” But would it not have been nicer according to (the) Qur’an to see although the context of the Qur’an was, in the case of skirmishes, ‘Don’t spread anything if you do not know’. If you hear anything about anything, before you spread anything in the community the Qur’an says verify.⁹² Did they verify with us? No, they didn’t.

RH: Ummm...

MK: Right? I’m not putting them down, all I’m saying is that their understanding is different. All I’m saying is that we must work together. We must be joining (with) each other. *Al-hamdu lillah*, Halal Food Authority is a member of a Muslim working organization, which was established by the Ministry of Agriculture. But each time we have a meeting there, we have got problems. The problems are these; the people accuse each other. As I said to you earlier, Halal Food Authority is a volunteer organisation. Obviously we charge money, there is no doubt about it because Allah says in the Qur’an as well that those people who collect money for the *zakah* (obligatory alms) and so forth, they are to be paid as well.⁹³ Because after all, you have your own wife, children and everything else?

RH: Yep.

MK: So, I was on live television once, somebody rang up. He said “Masood Khawaja, don’t listen to him! He’s a businessman. He drives a Mercedes.” Right? And because you are recording what I am giving you for the first time, I think it’s fair to say that much [inaudible] I don’t own anymore. I joined the Halal Food Authority in 1994, the Mercedes I had bought, I have got the papers: 1991.

RH: Um-hum.

MK: Right? Three years before I joined Halal Food Authority. So what kind of impression are we giving to ourselves?

RH: Yeah. Yeah.

MK: And I did not give any rebuttal. Why? Because Allah says [quotes in Arabic] ‘Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and warn in the best way’.⁹⁴ Because the very fact is that we have to understand each other. This is a very difficult job. This is a very difficult subject. Because the subject is this: “What is halal?” All the time this is the question. Our own thing is this, we have to do twofold awareness creation, and that is to say, within Muslim themselves to see what is halal, and how to procure and to seek for it. And also in the industry, I keep saying about industry. With all our heart to say [our purpose] in the procedure, the industry was to do Allah’s (bidding).

Because as a matter of fact, when I went in 1997 to Tesco to say that halal meat can be displayed by you, the door was closed. And I always make a joke of it, that my nose is so big because they shut the door on me.

RH: Um-hum.

MK: You know?

RH: Yeah.

MK: (laughs) But they are participating in it (now). Why is it we Muslims cannot actually put our house in order? Why is it we are competing with each other?

RH: In terms of this idea of unity, how do you think a single standard could be achieved? Or how we could get a unification, a well known, agreed and really enforceable standard for halal. How do you think that can come about?

MK: Well, I would not like to beat my own drum or anything of that kind. And I would not like to sound conceited, but what I would say is this; that being that nearly we are coming the maturation side in 16 years we’ve been in the wars as well. (laughs) So the Halal Food Authority has been there 16 years old now, as a matter of fact on the 26th of September (2010) 16 years I will have been with them. The words we are saying to everybody

(is), “Yes, you have your own organisation, you have your own symbol, you have your own kind of working methodology, but let us work and sit together and see how best we can move forward. We will not touch your clients, as long as you do not tread on our toes. Whatever you want to do.”

This is one of the reasons I have said many, many times on radio, television and media... and your recording as well... if people say that slightly stunned meat has to be labelled as Halal with the Halal Food Authority symbol, these events (which are) going on in the Islam channel and...other TV channels as well, then we say, “Yes. Our meat is slightly stunned.”

[MK takes an important call from Dubai]

MK: Go on.

RH: OK. Well that’s very useful. You were mentioning that you would like to sit down and try to find a way to move forward. In that vein, and this is one of my final questions: what is your vision for the future of halal meat in the UK?

MK: *Al-hamdu lillah*, very good question. I have already said about this; what is halal in London, has to be halal in Jeddah, has to be halal in Jakarta, has to be halal in Chicago, has to be halal in Karachi. It can’t be different.

RH: Yeah.

MK: Because our *din* (faith and way of life) is one. Our aim is one. Our criteria are one. That’s why we have got umbrella organisations, there is one in Europe and there is one worldwide.⁹⁵

We have about 40-60 organisations in there who are working together. We are about one thing, Mr. Harvey, we will not have *one* symbol all along anywhere. Simply because of the regulatory things in different countries and because of different other things. Because, would I let my symbol go? Would you let your symbol go? No. But what we can do is work together.

What we can do is recognise each other, respect each other's work, take each other's word for council. Trying not to criticise all the time, putting other people down, because that way we are putting other schools of thought down. We should never do that. We should look at the *din* (faith and way of life). We should look at Qur'an. We should talk logically. We should not say that the Prophet (*salla allahu alayhi wa sallam*) did not approve stunning...because the very fact is this; there was no electricity at that time and there was no question. There is no words of science and technology in the Qur'an and *hadith* (prophetic tradition) is there? So Allah says *ijtihad* (juridical reasoning) is the thing, which you have to do. You are a newcomer to the religion and you understand the logical and [inaudible] situation of all the *din* (faith and way of life). We are doing it because we are Muslim, but at the same time, there is nothing we can change in the Qur'an and the *hadith* (prophetic tradition) can we? So all we can do is follow it and improvise on that, without changing it. *Al-hamdu lillah, thumma al-hamdu lillah*, Halal Food Authority is a body which belongs to Muslims, the Muslims should be the ones. We can have five more organisations in there, but what we cannot have is this: each trying to put the other one down.

RH: Sure. Do you think...there can be? One idea that I have heard is to have some sort of independent body that would audit or report on what all the different monitoring or certification organisations are doing to give an independent view.

MK: When I was a child there was a story in a book...which was "How can we tell the cat is coming?" the mice used to say. Somebody said, "We can put a kind of bell on the neck (of the cat), so that each time it moves a ding-dong would come." Right? So one of the old (variety of) mice said, "Who is going to put that bell around his neck?" Right? So the situation is this: who is going to do this movement? There has been some sad talk about it that the regulatory team should come from Westminster. Would you imagine that if Westminster tries to make the halal law, would you not have the idea that 'are they telling us what to do in Islam?' Right? So what we have got to do is we have to understand ourselves first, what we require. As I mentioned to you earlier, we are doing this nationally,

al-hamdu lillah. We have got [inaudible] bodies as well, which agree. We have...discussions and documents prepared on halal standards, people talk about we don't have halal standards as well. *Al-hamdu lillah, thumma al-hamdu lillah* we have halal standards! We have a halal standards umbrella body as well. Right? But what are looking for is this...it is very difficult to say to ourselves that we want to seek help. The other day we had another incident there... I'm not going to name the organisation...they said, "We can work together."

RH: Yeah.

MK: Right? I said *al-hamdu lillah*, we can work together. And suddenly I thought, he's pinching our clients.

RH: Umm...

MK: He's ringing them and saying, "Look I can do it, Halal Food Authority can't do it". What would you think to that? So we have to be careful in there, haven't we?

RH: Um-Hum.

MK: Here at Halal Food Authority, believe me sometimes people ask for beef. Because we don't do beef that willingly. We send them to Ireland. There is an organisation in Ireland, which is authenticating beef, and they have a facility for beef as well, and why are we doing that? Because I believe in one thing on behalf of Halal Food Authority, we should be like a hospital department: orthopaedics separately, gynaecology separately, clinic separately. We shouldn't make mumbo-jumbo out of everything, like we know everything, no, no. What we've got to do is: we have got to work together, learn things mutually as well. We have about 360 client listings under our belt.

RH: Umm...

MK: Right? *Al-hamdu lillah*, we are serving them very nicely. *Al-hamdu lillah*, we want to do that. Whosoever wants to come and see how we do it, our doors are open to anybody.

We are not hiding anything. But when people criticise wrongly, when they give the wrong kind of impression, they cause aversion in the community. We don't give them a rebuttal. All we do is this; we say this is our stance, this is our standard, this is how we are doing it. It is much more obvious from that...although we did not have to advertise...because it costs a lot of money by the way. You know the adverts which we are now running on the Islam channel, you can have a look at that, just before the news at 9:00 and before the news at 11:00...we put everything in there... so far we have done, 'This is how we do it' and the next time we are going to do, 'What is it that we need to be looking at'. My challenge and everybody else's is that, look, the eating habits of people are different. My eating habits are different. My children, and their children (because I'm a grandfather as well), their habits are different. They want to eat halal, no doubt, but the cuisine is different.

RH: Yeah.

MK: Right? Items are different. So we have to understand, when we talk about alcohol, when we talk about pigment, when we talk about enzymes, when we talk about cloning, when we talk about genetically modified foods (GM foods), we have to understand...I give the challenge to people...it says in the *hadiths* (prophetic traditions)...but show me one book that is written on meat hygiene in Islamic circles, show me one book. People will have given opinions in articles, but there is no set book for it, no standard for it.

RH: Yeah.

MK: Right? There is no standard or auditing is there? So they have to be created. This is how Halal Food Authority, *al-hamdu lillah*, we are proud that we have done it.

RH: Umm...Uh-huh.

MK: But at the same time, give us credit where it is due...criticise when you think that there is something wrong, but it says in the Qur'an that an, 'argument should be a good one.'⁹⁶ So that we can both improve things,

so that we can both work in there. So what we do is this...what I'm saying, *al-hamdu lillah* is this: the Halal Food Authority criteria is this, our standards are there, our website is there, and we what we want to see is that we are open. We're not saying, that we are not doing stunning and then behind the scenes we are doing stunning...no no no...[inaudible].

So what we can do is make science and technology subservient to the Islamic dictum. We have to move forward. We have to see that we also apply the Islamic dictum in there, and also look at these things (of the progress of science and technology). As I mentioned to you, the logo, which you asked a question (about) in the first place, that (when) they see the Halal Food Authority logo, *al-hamdu lillah* they will say that it has been audited, seen contractually and everything. That we are at least working towards the Islamic side. Now the agreement and contract is there, hygiene control is there, food safety is there, environmental health is there. And we want to see the laws obeyed as well. All the EU laws where we are, where we live.

So I think what we have got to do is...both things *in sha allah*, and may Allah give you an opportunity in five years time to ask the same questions and to give me (the ability) to say to you on behalf of Halal Food Authority, "These are the improvements we feel we have put in there."

Halal Food Authority has worked with the animal rights people. Do you know there was a time when they would say, "Halal is not a thing which you should be eating, because it goes against animal welfare. *Al-hamdu lillah* they now understand that that's what we do. We look after not only the hygiene and everything else, animal welfare as well. *Al-hamdu lillah* we are proud that we are doing it. We want to move forward, we invite all and sundry to say that we invite producers to actually come forward. Open their own farms, open their own slaughterhouses, open their own processing and production plants and see how we can benefit from the science and technology. Let's implement these things for the benefit of, *in sha allah*, the Muslim *ummah* (community). This is about the congregation of all 27 million Muslims only in EU countries. So *al-hamdu lillah*, what we can for these people from here, we can even serve the

Muslims in Pakistan as well, and Egypt as well and all the other Muslim countries as well, *in sha allah*.

RH: Can I ask my final question? You have already spoken about the meat industry becoming more expedient, the technology has allowed more service of meat. Are there any dangers associated with the fact that as we can serve more and more meat to the community – the context is halal meat here – as the technology increases we can, whatever people want we can supply them with that level of food (meat) to consume. Do you feel there are any dangers in terms of health, or the intensive farming techniques being used? In terms of maybe animal welfare, maybe environmental dangers...?

MK: That is a wonderful question, which you have asked. My [inaudible] is a doctor, and whenever we sit down we talk about what causes cancer. What effect the meat quantities (we eat) has...and all that.

What we are saying in the Halal Food Authority is, “Eat less, eat wisely”. Halal meat sometimes, is second-rate meat, as well. Muslims eat very much meat, because it is available that much in the market. Chicken has become one of the topmost meat industries throughout the world, everybody eats meat. But what they do not realise, is this; because of the intensive farming and all that, the chicken is not actually chicken. I always say sometimes, it might become as if I’m trying to make a pun out of here. No it’s not. Chicken is not chicken. Lamb is not lamb, Right? Our vegetables are not vegetables at times, because these are being grown differently.

So what we have got to understand is: “Eat less, eat wisely”.

I am imploring people, privately at the moment and *in sha allah*, I will be presenting [inaudible] in the next conference in a few weeks time. I’m going to be declaring there in public that we should have a meat free day in the UK for Muslims. We should not eat meat that day at all. We should eat things which actually are nourishing...are halal...

RH: Is this one day a week? Or one day in a year?

MK: One day a week. We should have a meatless day. Because after all, what halal means is wholesome, pure and fit for human consumption. So if we can have that, we should be doing it all the time. After all the *hadith* (prophetic tradition) was that in the stomach we should have three sections: one for the food, one for the water and the other one to churn it all (i.e. empty, or air). Why do we have this *sawm* (fasting) 30 or 29 days in the year? So that we can have that particular (feeling) that everything is halal in front of us but we can't eat. Not only is it *ibadah* (worship) but we can see what hunger and thirst means. But at the same time, how much nicer it would be, that meat we take home for £2.60 which I am going to eat now, if I can give that £2.60 to a less fortunate country than the one we are living in here. How much nicer it *would* be? And also it would help the industry as well, all this. There are many ways of looking at these things. Because, as I said to you, sometimes halal and *dhibah* (slaughtered according to the Islamic *dhabh* procedure) is confused. Allah has made everything halal unto us, but at the same time there are restrictions on it. One thing wasn't mentioned and I'm going to mention it now, which you can add, sometimes Muslims don't realise, people don't realise is that fish are stunned as well.

RH: Umm.

MK: Salmon and trout, when they are coming out of the industrial farming process, they are stunned before they are sent out to the market. So we have to look at everything from a rational point of view *in sha allah*. So *jazaka allahu khayran* (may Allah reward you) for asking these question once you have done these transcriptions, let us have it in the final form, *in sha allah*.

RH: I will. I have to say, unfortunately the small length of this project, and the small scale of it will mean that a lot of things will not be able to reach the final form. I will try to weave in what I can.

MK: But can you send me a transcription of the whole talk, and would you please do that separately?

RH: Yeah. I don't know if I'll get the chance, but I'll send you what I can.

MK: Please send me whatever you can, Mr Harvey don't worry.

RH: I will send you what I can. Thank you for your time.

Halal meat makes up a significant part of the diet of Muslims in the UK, yet doubts have emerged about the provenance of much that is labelled as halal. Questions have also been raised about the religious validity of certain technological innovations regularly used in the slaughtering process, in particular those of stunning and mechanical slaughter. This report analyses these problems against the backdrop of the phenomenon of mass production and consumption from which they have emerged, before engaging with the UK Muslim community's response: voluntary halal certification. Through interviews with the leading figures of the Halal Food Authority and Halal Monitoring Committee, as well as the use of other sources, this report explains and analyses the work and differing perspectives of these two main certification bodies. It provides recommendations for moving beyond contention and polemic, building on areas of common agreement, and putting the unique strengths of each body to the better service of the community.

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