Material Muslim Authority

Danish Debates about Religious Markets

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Material Muslim Authority: Danish Debates about Religious Markets

Abstract

The increasing visibility of halal (meat) products in non-Muslim countries, such as Denmark, highlights the central and controversial role of Muslim authority in the regulation/certification of halal products along two axes: Muslims/non-Muslims and divergent Muslim groups/organisations. Using qualitative data gathered through participant observation and interviews conducted at Muslim organisations and businesses in and around Copenhagen, I argue that halal production and regulation is a constructive lens through which to explore why and how Muslim authority and legitimacy are generated and contested in contemporary Denmark. Muslim authority within the halal market evidently emerges at the interface between local and international Muslim organisations/certifiers, the state and consumers.

Keywords: Denmark; halal; authority; markets

Introduction

In 2014, a ban on halal slaughter performed without prior stunning of animals came into effect in Denmark. Over the last two decades or so, global markets for halal food, particularly meat, have grown rapidly, and certification of products as halal by Muslim authorities has consequently become an essential requirement for businesses and Muslim consumers. These processes have generated a novel form of Muslim authority that relates to regulation, sparking debates about the legitimacy of that authority among Muslims as well as non-Muslims. The reactions to the ban on halal slaughter performed without stunning revealed that some Muslim organisations in Denmark felt that this move undermined their authority to classify what is or should be halal. The ban came into existence in the wake of ongoing debates in Denmark about halal slaughter and the marking of halal-slaughtered meat, and it stirred controversy among Muslim groups within and beyond the country. The Danish Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries referred to a Danish animal protection law that authorises the minister to make a unilateral decision without first approaching the national parliament. Formerly the president of the Animal Welfare Intergroup, which advocates for animal welfare and conservation issues, the minister now asserted his legal authority to protect animal welfare.

The ban raises a number of issues beyond that of animal welfare. First, at the organisational level, food production and regulation are integral to the assertion of authority and rights relating to Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as to divergent groups of Muslims.

Second, in the heated controversy that arose over the ban, the critical question of how Muslim authority is generated in contemporary Denmark was largely overlooked. Arguing that halal production and regulation is a constructive lens through with to explore how Muslim authority is generated and contested in Denmark, I show that Muslim authority within the halal market emerges at the interface of local and international Muslim organisations/certifiers, the state and consumers. Not only is Muslim authority in Denmark contingent on the country's role as a food exporter in an increasingly globalised market for halal products, but halal in Denmark also raises the question of what constitutes material Muslim authority. In other words, to what extent is or should halal production and regulation of specific commodities be formative of Muslim authority in Denmark and globally? The term 'material' that appears in the title of this article encompasses the significance of halal in generating Muslim authority as well halal 'materials' (meat, non-meat and ingredients) within modern (food) production. The research question examined here concerns the consequences of debates about halal and Muslim authority in Denmark.

In this study, I explore ongoing debates about what halal is or ought to be in contemporary Denmark, with specific reference to Muslim authority at national and global levels. In recent decades, the increasing visibility of halal (meat) products in non-Muslim countries, such as Denmark, has been accompanied by controversy about the role of Muslim authority and public concerns relating to the lucrativeness of the certification of Muslim halal products. These debates are reinforced in the Danish national context in light of the widely held and deeply engrained popular perception of a strictly secular public sphere.

This article draws on qualitative data derived from fieldwork comprising participant observation and interviews conducted among Muslim organisations and businesses in and around Copenhagen. Specifically, I explore how Muslim authority is generated and contested in the Danish context. This inquiry is part of a larger research project (Lever and Fischer, 2018a) that entails a comparative exploration of kosher (a Hebrew term that means 'fit' or 'proper') and halal in the UK and Denmark. During fieldwork in 2015-2016, 12 Muslim and Jewish organisations were selected for interviews/participant observation to obtain a good representative spread, that is, to cover types of organisations with different histories, sizes, cultures, structures, hierarchies and values to observe and analyse. This topic also feeds into global discussions of halal, politics and markets (Fischer, 2015b).

The remainder of the article is divided into five sections. I first discuss halal in the contemporary world, and then reflect on halal, authority and authorities. The third section presents a contextual discussion of Islam in Denmark, which provides a backdrop for the Danish

case. The analysis presented in the fourth section focuses on halal and Muslim authority. Lastly, the discussion in the concluding section brings together the study's findings and reflects on broader perspectives derived from my analysis of Muslim authority in Denmark.

What is halal within globalised mass production?

For Muslims and Muslim organisations, and, thus, for Muslim authority, the question of animal stunning is a highly contested one. The precise meaning of *dhabh*, Islamic religious slaughter, in practice, is constantly contested and negotiated by scholars, imams and consumers, especially in non-Muslim countries. These disputes originate in debates about the origins of Islam, which Muslims believe can be traced to the Qur'an and Sunna (the life, actions and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad). Two prescriptive sets of guidelines for halal slaughter follow from these sources, and the ongoing controversy about what constitutes authentic halal meat is rooted in the underlying discourses as they are now interpreted (Lever and Miele, 2012). The first position is based on the understanding that all 'People of the Book' share common slaughter practices and that Muslims can consume meat from animals reared and slaughtered by Jews and Christians as well as by Muslims. This position is aligned with European Union (EU) legislation that requires all animals to be made unconscious by stunning prior to slaughter. The second position, which stems from derogation of the above legislation, allows EU member states to grant slaughterhouses an exemption from the requirement to stun animals before slaughter in accordance with human rights legislation that provides minorities with the freedom to practice their religion. Specifically, while some European countries, namely, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland, banned religious slaughter without stunning in the 1930s or earlier, EU legislation now grants derogation from stunning that respects religious freedom in line with Article 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. In countries with large Muslim populations where derogation is legally established and applied as, for example, in the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and France, there are now halal markets for meat from *both* stunned and unstunned animals that can be exported (Lever and Miele, 2012; Yakin and Christians, 2021).

With the proliferation of halal products, constituting a globalised religious market, 'scientific' modes and methods of production and traceability are becoming increasingly important for producers, traders and consumers. A growing focus on the application of such methods to verify commodities as halal based on 'science' leads to ever-increasing requirements to cover new practices and types of commodities, including cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and hygiene products. The central problem in much of the discourse about

science and halal (food) is that, on the one hand, science is viewed as part of the solution for achieving more reliable and verifiable conditions for halal production while, on the other, various food types are constantly being modified by science and cannot be clearly defined as halal because of chemical reactions occurring in the production process. In this regard, familiarity with E-numbers, that is, number codes for food additives that are usually found on food labels throughout the EU assumes salience.

Understandings and practices relating to halal requirements vary between countries and companies producing and importing halal food (Riaz and Chaudry, 2004). For various reasons, Islamic specialists and state institutions, such as the Islamic Development Department of Malaysia (JAKIM), Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Ulema Council [MUI]) and the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), have played key roles in halal regulation – and the impact of their activities was to be 'felt' in Denmark (Fischer, 2008, 2011, 2016). It is thus apparent that the Danish case is framed by a global perspective. The increased demand for halal products by conscientious and educated Muslim consumers has driven the export of halal products by developed countries that have entered a market previously dominated by Muslim countries. Moreover, the proliferation of Western food franchises has transformed the international food market, which is now subjected to new standards of halal certification.

In the twentieth century, Muslim dietary rules assumed renewed significance, as some Muslims attempted to demonstrate how such rules conform to modern reasoning and the findings of scientific research. These transformations in meaning are inseparable from current debates over material Muslim authority – and not least a global market for halal certification (Bergeaud-Blackler, 2015). Another common theme in discussions regarding the revival and renewal of these dietary rules is the search for alternatives to what are seen to be Western values, ideologies and lifestyles, as reflected in globalised halal production.

Halal, authority and authorities

I consider halal to be an important 'Islamic authority platform' (Bano, 2018) that is formative of debates about the status of religious knowledge and the institutions that produce that knowledge. Specifically, I shall show how halal conditions and is conditioned by a routinisation of religious authority between polarisation/traditionalisation (slaughter without stunning) and the rationalisation of charismatic authority (accepting slaughter without stunning). Similarly, three Muslim responses to Western modernity can be identified: modernism (Western modernisation/secularism, fundamentalist/reformist and neotraditionalism) (Bayram, 2014).

Three forms of legitimacy in support of authority can be identified: pragmatic (based on audience self-interest); moral (based on normative approval); and cognitive (based on comprehensibility and taken-for-grantedness) (Suchman, 1995). Arguably, many dynamics in the organisational environment stem from cultural norms, symbols, beliefs and rituals (such as ritual slaughter) and synthesize these three approaches, of which the moral is of the most importance for my study. Danish debates are also informed by global governance organisations (Koppell, 2008) such as Muslim World League that challenge legitimacy/authority in the local political context. Patterns of authority in Islam are shaped in dialectical interaction with external historical factors such as the globalisation of the market for halal (Dabashi, 1989). The questions of authority/legitimacy feed into the important aspect of halal business ethics such as global halal standards/certifications (Ismaeel and Blaim, 2012). As we shall see, even if debates about slaughter are controversial, they are framed by liberal terms of social cooperation, political obligation and loyalty to a non-Muslim state (March, 2007). As halal is one of the most hotly debated 'Muslim' topics in Denmark, it lends a constructive material quality to the exploration of Muslim authority. This approach resonates with that of Bowen (1993), who explored the diversity of Islam, drawing attention to debates about what Islam is or ought to be and the divergent responses produced by these controversies.

These controversies relate, for example, to whether Muslim certification bodies should be granted halal authority and if so, what would be the nature of that authority in modern, secular societies. In the case of halal authority in Denmark, it is not so much the agro-industrial food system that is contested, but rather what is perceived as excessive 'secular' dominance and regulation within the Danish political system is the subject of contention (Fischer, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c). Most importantly, perhaps, for my study of halal in Denmark, food economies incorporate moral values as well as utilitarian motives that are linked to industrial food systems and the complex politics of food. Agribusiness, sustained economic growth, multinational companies and ever-expanding international trade have not only transformed the economic foundations of Western diets but also created possibilities for much more diverse ways of eating (Warde, 2016). In contemporary secular Europe, significant religious observances coexist with a proliferation of well-advertised specialised diets. Thus, a particular characteristic of the modern world entails the coexistence and overlapping of multiple options associated with religious convictions, health concerns, political commitment and Muslim authority.

A central theme articulated within debates by Islamic organisations in Denmark focuses on claims to authority concerning halal made by some Muslim groups and, conversely, the rejection of that authority and the economy associated with it by other groups. I examine these

debates, which are situated at the interfaces of expanding markets, the secular domain and the rights and demands of a growing group of Muslim consumers. In addition, I explore the ways in which halal is becoming delocalised and its consequences for the power and authority of Islamic organisations. Ultimately, these issues raise broader questions of authority in modern societies and reveal how religion and (food) science do or do not relate to each other.

Muslim authority is closely linked to the power inherent in halal certification that is embedded within contemporary Islamic institutional discourses and practices. Beyond banning religious slaughter without first stunning animals, the state in Denmark has virtually no authority to inspect, certify or standardise halal. Furthermore, this impotence of the state is constantly reinforced as increasing numbers of products appear within this expanding market, in which both Islamic organisations and commercial interests compete over standards and certification at the margins of the secular state.

Logos facilitate the personalisation of halal exchanges or transactions of halal products in which the producer, trader and consumer ideally all share a common understanding of the symbolic content of the halal logo. Certifying bodies not only claim authority in these transactions but also highlight the naturalness and reasonableness of the instituted rules. The religious and totemic dimensions of advertisements of these goods bring out their cultural potency. At the same time, halal logos attach political and moral meanings to commodities. However, the significant expansion of these systems of certification means that consumers of these products are faced with a diverse range of such systems.

Islam in Denmark

Although Christianity is the state religion and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Denmark is the dominant church in the country, contemporary Denmark is characterised by religious diversity. Arguably, the scope for accommodating religious diversity in Denmark is premised on a particular configuration of secularity dominated by the state-supported Evangelical-Lutheran Church. However, the widely held and deeply entrenched popular perception that the public sphere is strictly secular is of particular pertinence (Nielsen, 2014). Denmark stands out as being highly secular and highly non-secular at the same time, that is, the state and church are tightly intertwined. Ethnic Danes are less likely to favour active accommodation of religious diversity because they consider themselves to be highly secular. Specifically, they consider religion to be a private matter that should not be explicitly or publicly accommodated beyond the individual's legal right to practise his or her religion. In effect, this means that issues relating

to Islam in particular, such as burial or halal, have become hotly debated topics, especially post-9/11.

The Danish population includes an estimated 207,000 Muslims (Statistics Denmark, 2016), who originate from many countries. The largest groups by size and origin are Turks, Iraqis, Lebanese, Pakistanis, Somalis and Afghans. In addition, there is a small number of Danish converts to Islam (Jensen and Østergaard, 2007). There are 56 Islamic congregations in Denmark, with Muslims, who account for an estimated 4% of the total population, comprising the second largest religious community (Jacobsen, 2012). Copenhagen is the capital of Denmark and greater Copenhagen has about 1,3000,000 inhabitants. Copenhagen is home to the largest Muslim community and in areas such as Nørrebro Muslims are estimated to comprise about 20% of the population (ibid.).

Halal food is widely available in Denmark, and the country is a major exporter to the Muslim world. Both right-wing and left-wing political parties have tried to prohibit ritual slaughter since the mid-1990s (Jacobsen, 2009). However, the globalisation and regulation of the halal market that has occurred over the last two decades, commencing from around 2000, is comparable to that of the kosher market. Almost all of the chicken sold in Danish shops is halal-slaughtered, and Copenhagen alone has numerous halal butchers.

Garbi Schmidt (2011) has identified four periods in the history of Islam in Denmark. The first covers the period prior to 1960 and entails encounters between Danes and Muslims during the European crusades and explorations of the Middle East. The second, described as the 'decades of settlement' from 1960 to 1990, focuses on increasing Muslim immigration and tightening immigration rules commencing from 1970. New waves of refugees and family/marriage reunification impacted on the welfare state and its political landscape. The third period described as 'new trends, new generations' covers 1990–2001, a transformative period during which a substantial number of Bosnian refugees came to live in Denmark in the wake of the civil war in the Balkans, leading to increased awareness of the presence of Muslims in Denmark. Within the media, Muslims have often been portrayed as taking advantage of the Danish welfare state legislation and being unwilling to 'integrate'. The fourth period, described as 'Islam and Muslims post-September 11, 2001' is thus characterised by 9/11, Denmark's participation in the occupation of Iraq and the 2005-2006 cartoon controversy.

A case study of Muslim practices in Danish primary schools revealed how and why halal food practices are governed (Jensen, 2016). The study demonstrated that the governance of Muslim practices has evolved in the absence of national regulation and counter to prevailing Danish public ideals. Evidently, halal food in schools is not of major concern to teachers and,

in general, formal policies concerning Muslim practices in schools have not been adequately considered. However, accommodation of halal in the everyday lives of Muslim pupils is relatively unproblematic in general. Drawing on different cultural and social models and ethnographic material gathered in primary school classrooms, Martha Karrebæk (2014) explored how primary school children in Copenhagen use food to organise social space. The study focused on national food registers formulated for 'health' and 'halal'. Whereas food served in the school canteen was halal, food served at social festivals would always entail a choice between halal and non-halal. Nevertheless, halal was never explicitly discussed, resulting in unexplained discrepancies between the 'halal model' and the 'health model' (ibid., 22). Moreover, although halal plays an important role in Danish agri-food exports, a confrontational attitude towards migrants, and Muslims in particular, is evident in urban Denmark as most Muslims live in urban areas.

Claiming or rejecting halal authority?

At the time when I conducted fieldwork in 2016, approximately 99% of chickens in Denmark were slaughtered at abattoirs approved for halal slaughter by the Islamic Cultural Center of Scandinavia (www.islamiccc.com/index.php/en/; (ICCOS) and/or the Muslim World League's office in Copenhagen. The ICCOS, which was founded in 1976, is housed in a villa in a north-western suburb of Copenhagen. It is privately run and includes a mosque. It also runs a school, where students learn about the Qur'an, and arranges courses for local Danish Muslims, who for the most part are of Arab and Pakistani origin. The ICCOS is the largest halal certifier of meat and non-meat products in Denmark. Questions regarding halal and authority are important for the Danish state and companies, given the country's status as a major exporter of both food and non-food products. Danish embassies in countries, such as Malaysia, where halal products feature prominently within Muslim markets, try to facilitate Danish companies in exporting their products and in the local manufacturing of products that must meet halal requirements. Delegations from countries where halal is important visit Denmark to inspect abattoirs and other production facilities. The ICCOS imam came to Denmark in 2001 and serves as the organisation's 'halal supervisor', answering to key halal authorities in Southeast Asia. He also handles the halal production of companies in Germany, Sweden, Poland and the UK. The imam, who receives delegations from countries that make halal products, has an important function, as Danish law mandates that animals and poultry slaughtered for meat must be stunned before slaughter. In the eyes of many Muslims and Islamic organisations that prefer to consume meat from unstunned animals, this issue is controversial and seems to reinforce the need for proper

Islamic handling of such products. A local halal-certifying body, such as the ICCOS, is responsible for ensuring that animal slaughter follows correct Islamic procedures through the appointment of a Muslim butcher and proper record-keeping.

In Denmark, it is mandatory for a state-appointed veterinarian and a Muslim abattoir employee to control the ritual slaughter process, which reflects shared authority in halal production. The ICCOS must approve the Muslim abattoir employee, who pronounces the phrase *Allahu akbar* (God is great) at the start of the slaughter process and after each break. Denmark also exports a wide range of non-meat food products such as cake, chocolate, chips and even enzyme products. Thus, the products that Danish companies wish to export to Muslim countries must be accompanied by a certificate stating that no prohibited ingredients were used in the production process. During one conversation, the imam recalled an occasion when a Danish company called him and asked for halal certification. He asked why the company would want certification for its non-meat products, as this was surely unnecessary. The company representative explained that a foreign halal certification body wanted halal certification for this product.

The imam asks companies to send him samples that he can submit to a laboratory to test for alcohol and pork gelatine. The demand for halal products and their regulation emanates to a large extent from Southeast Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. The ICCOS educates butchers employed at abattoirs across Denmark about the meaning of halal and how to implement halal requirements. It investigates the halal fitness of raw materials, which are sent to laboratories for testing. However, the imam stressed that companies are 'honest' and send all of the requested information needed to verify production. Moreover, much of this information is readily available on the companies' websites, to which the imam can refer when dealing with foreign halal certification bodies. The ICCOS sometimes receives visits from representatives of these bodies. Thus, the organisation not only carries out inspections but is itself subject to inspection. The imam viewed the relationship between the ICCOS and certification as a 'responsibility' to exchange 'Islamic information'. He explained that, even if the halal requirements set by certifiers are strict and tend to increase, they must always entail compliance with Danish law (Lever and Fischer, 2018b).

The ICCOS follows universal 'Islamic standards'. The imam stressed that many standards exist within the global market for halal products, and the ICCOS should be flexible and adapt to this diversity. However, on the basis of his experience attending halal events in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, he concluded that, notwithstanding the diversity of halal standards, Islam is the same all over the world. Nevertheless, in recent years, pressures have

increased, and some Muslim groups in Denmark have questioned the work of the ICCOS.

One interviewee, Benyones, who has a Moroccan background, represents the Danish Halal Fund and is a board member of *Det Islamiske Trossamfund* (DIT; www.wakf.com/index.php/da/), which can be literally translated as 'The Islamic Faith Community'. He works as a paramedic and does voluntary work for DIT, with a specific focus on youth. Benyones argued that the Muslim community in Denmark needs an independent organisation to control the market for halal meat. This need emerged in 2011, when DIT realised that penetrating captive bolt pistols were being used to stun animals. Although the ICCOS is the main halal certifier, DIT along with the Danish Halal Fund, a Muslim umbrella organisation comprising 56 Muslim associations based in Denmark and chaired by Benyones, contend that the ICCOS does not provide adequate supervision and control. This perceived gap led to the formation of the Danish Halal Fund. Benyones, in his role as chairperson of the Danish Halal Fund, based his argument on his visits to abattoirs supervised by the ICCOS. The lack of constant supervision in these abattoirs and the use of captive bolt pistols to stun the animals were of particular concern to him.

The *Muslimernes Fællesråd* (MFR; Muslim Joint Council) similarly decided to challenge what they viewed as the ICCOS's monopoly on halal certification. Thus, they developed their own monitoring system in consultation with European halal certifiers, while also ensuring that they had sufficient economic resources to extend beyond certification performed by volunteers. The MFR's website (www.mfr.nu/pages) clarifies that The MFR carries out halal certification of animal as well as non-animal products in conjunction with the Halal Food Council of Europe (HFCE), one of Europe's leading halal certifiers. Thus, both the MFR and the Danish Halal Fund are pushing for tighter halal regulation comparable to that implemented in the UK by the Halal Monitoring Committee (HMC) and *A Votre Service* in France. Not surprisingly, neither the Danish Bacon and Meat Council nor the ICCOS have accepted their criticism.

During our discussion of the above issues, Benyones explained that halal reliability must be based on supervision, control and transparency. Thus, as in the case of the organic market, modern halal must move beyond the traditional relationship of trust between sellers and buyers to forge authority. Moreover, in many cases, the company itself is still responsible for the halal process, employing one or several Muslim staff to ensure that halal logos are placed on product packaging. He explained that an increasing number of companies are approaching DIT to enquire about halal certification because their customers in the Middle East and Southeast Asia are seeking reliable and independent halal certification by third parties. However, because many producers in Denmark are unsure about halal certification processes, they miss out on lucrative

business opportunities. DIT is sometimes approached by companies intending to certify 'abstract' things that Benyones believes do not warrant certification. He provided the example of halal-certified mineral water, which is unnecessary and indicative of the over-commercialisation of halal certification.

Benyones argued that ritual slaughter, involving the drainage of blood from an unstunned animal as well as avoidance of pork, including pork gelatine, makes halal consumption healthier. Moreover, he avoids haram products with E-numbers, such as E120 (a food colouring agent known as carmine that is isolated from an insect found on cactus plants in Mexico and used to add a ruby-red colour to drinks and sweets, for example). He wondered why halal meat is not more expensive than non-halal meat and argued that proper certification practices and processes should drive the price up. Ideally, he would like to see a system comparable to that established in the UK, entailing certification of products, companies and shops by reliable certifiers such as the HMC, thus enabling consumers to make more informed choices based on properly authorised certification. Although the Halal Fund has challenged the halal establishment in Denmark, it is by no means clear that there is a consensus favouring stringent and fastidious halal regulation among the majority of Muslims in Denmark, as the example below illustrates.

The Ahmadiyya mission, an Islamic reform movement founded in India in the 1860s, was established in Denmark following an early wave of Muslim migration in the 1950s. In 1966/1967, its members erected the first purpose-built mosque, the Nusrat Djahan Mosque, outside Copenhagen. The group, with about 600 members, is well-integrated into Danish society, but despite its long history and important place in the history of Islam in Denmark, the Ahmadi community remains under-researched (Larsson and Björkman, 2010). Falah, the Ahmadiyya imam, arrived in Denmark from India in the 1980s. He studied Ahmadiyya theology in London for seven years and is now pursuing his MA in Scandinavian languages and literature. Falah's position on halal, and that of the Ahmadi more broadly, draws on the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. Halal meat is preferred, but Ahmadis do not place much emphasis on halal-certified meat.

The spiritual and moral relationship between God and human beings is at the core of Ahmadiyya theology and practice. Consequently, in the eyes of Ahmadis and Falah, many Muslims are overly focused on the physical and material side of Islam, while downplaying spirituality, morality, justice, love and the inner search for and development of a relationship between God and the human being. Looking within is seen to make life easier by lessening competition and judgements about, for example, the halal/haram consumption practices of

others, which are evident in material and shallow forms of religiosity and piety. Thus, the Ahmadiyya mission is not involved in animal slaughter or halal certification. Moreover, it does not wish to engage in such business and in what is considered to be an overly commercialised form of religion. Its position is that such practices should be separated from the theological and spiritual aspects of Islam.

More broadly, Ahmadis are somewhat perplexed by the emergence of material Islam; halal Coca-Cola, wine gums, E-numbers and toothpaste are not only seen as unnecessary but also as 'silly', overly commercial and claiming unwarranted authority. Such issues never feature in the Ahmadi congregation's Friday prayers; rather, spirituality is at the centre of the teachings of the organisation's caliph and imams. In general, the Ahmadiyya mission consciously refrains from benefiting from the Islamic economy. It is sustained by donations from the congregation, and considers itself apolitical, its main purpose being to work for the congregation to develop the spiritual bond between God and human beings. The key point here is that not all Muslims are fastidious about halal, and what is viewed as excessive authority generated in this market is often critiqued within the Muslim community in Denmark.

Conclusions

Halal production and regulation provide a constructive lens through which to explore Muslim authority in contemporary Denmark. Halal sits uneasily between a lucrative global market, secularism and the question of whether Muslim authority is or should be material in nature. The ICCOS, DIT and the Ahmadiyya are all aware that the moral authority and legitimacy of Muslim organisations in Denmark may hinge on the matter of halal, the local political context and powerful global governance organisations. Roughly speaking, however, they differ in their outlook and response to the halal slaughter debate and the proliferation of global halal. The ICCOS most of all seems to embody a modernist approach to halal characterised by accepting unstunned slaughter and cooperating with the Danish state, businesses and a variety of global governance organisations. Conversely, DIT tend to adopt a neo-traditionalist approach: calling for the right to unstunned slaughter within a regulated and global framework while the Ahmadiyya as a reform movement rejects material authority/legitimacy generated through halal.

The Muslim population in Denmark is small, but the availability of halal products in urban areas, such as Copenhagen, has vastly expanded over the last decade. Almost all of the chicken produced in Denmark is halal-certified by the ICCOS. Thus, Muslim consumers have access to a wide range of shopping choices. The ban on the slaughter of animals without stunning,

introduced in 2014, drew attention to the fact that most halal meat in Denmark was produced from animals that were already stunned before slaughter. Meat products are still subjected most strictly to religious requirements and thus authority. In the eyes of some Muslims, it is paradoxical that state secularism prohibits meat produced from the slaughter of unstunned animals when this slaughtering method is allowed in several other countries. Thus, some Muslims actively search for and buy meat produced from unstunned animals. Conversely, others, such as the Ahmadis, argue that the issue of stunning animals before slaughter is not a major concern. Apart from the Ahmadis, some other informants in my study did not consider stunning an important issue and, as I could find only one halal butcher specialising in meat produced from unstunned animals, this sentiment appears to be widely shared among Muslims in Copenhagen.

If more consumers were focused on meat produced from unstunned animals, there would be a larger market for this specific product. Thus, while many of my informants articulated a preference for meat from unstunned animals, they mostly bought meat, such as lamb and beef, obtained from stunned animals, at the butchers. Notwithstanding the prohibition of slaughter without stunning, as one informant pointed out, only a few butchers were selling meat from unstunned animals imported from the UK and France prior to the ban's introduction in 2014. However, the ban on unstunned animal slaughter made more Muslims aware of the issues relating to stunning/unstunning and the role of authority in halal activism generated among some organisations and consumers. In general, the market for imported meat produced from unstunned animals is unregulated, and distributors and sellers find it difficult to determine what qualities the meat they sell has acquired before they receive it. In this article, I have shown how halal activists or organisations advocate for meat from unstunned animals in Denmark, whereas other Muslims find this immaterial. Thus, although many Muslims are not deeply concerned about this issue, halal activists constantly call on the state to repeal halal regulation. The efforts of animal rights activists have, however, proven to be more forceful and politically successful.

My study has revealed how halal markets are linked and contested at different levels of the social scale. All the informants in the larger project of which this article is part are acutely aware of the reality that they live in a world where halal markets, regulation and food values are globalising and of the centralisation of authority/authorities. Even the most 'secular' of these consumers must relate to and negotiate larger issues, such as halal, which inform distinctions between individuals and groups in everyday life as well as in the specific global, European, national and local contexts that frame their lives. In short, this analysis has revealed that food values are conditioned by and themselves condition a divergent range of understandings and

practices at different levels on the social scale.

This research was carried out as a comparative study of the UK and Denmark (Lever and Fischer, 2018a). Thus, there are broader perspectives that frame my focus on Denmark. The wider study showed that Islam/halal is less strongly regulated by the state in the UK, where the slaughter of animals without stunning is permitted. Thus, the UK has emerged as one of the largest global producers of halal food. The production and regulation of halal products within this market are pervasive and are expanding in increasingly complex ways. By comparison, the market for halal products in Denmark is of more recent origin, reflecting the fact that the main wave of Muslim migration to Denmark did not start until the 1960s. The UK market for halal is vast and expanding because local religious consumers traditionally support this market. Conversely, while smaller groups of religious consumers in Denmark consider halal to be important, it plays an essential role in food exports.

Many informants in both countries agreed that science is needed in halal production, and many were searching for knowledge about how to live a pious life. This knowledge comes not only from religious texts but also from ulama, family and friends, and from lists of acceptable foods/ingredients available on websites and smartphone apps. This situation testifies to the diversification of authority involved in halal, but it is still the logos of specific halal certifiers that are marked on halal 'materials' in shops. After slaughter without stunning was prohibited in Denmark, meat from unstunned animals was imported into Denmark from other countries, including the UK. Many Muslims began searching for halal butchers in Copenhagen who sold halal meat from unstunned animals, whereas they previously accepted whatever meat was on offer, which was mostly from stunned animals. In the UK, concerns were expressed about the dilution of British culture, and when the Farm Animal Welfare Council petitioned for the abolition of religious slaughter in 1985, Muslims mounted a more concerted response at the national level for the first time. It was at this point that a national body of halal butchers was proposed as a way of protecting Muslim identity and, with the encouragement of the Muslim Parliament, the Halal Food Authority (HFA; www.halalfoodauthority.com) emerged in 1994. In 2003, the more orthodox HMC emerged. From the outset, the HMC mounted a challenge to the HFA's hegemony by opposing their position on pre-stunning and mechanical slaughter and by questioning the halal qualities ascribed to meat that went through their production processes. Competition between the HFA and the HMC created awareness of halal as a contested issue. Conversely, in Denmark no comparable competition has occurred among the large, national halal-certifying bodies to increase awareness among Muslims regarding the halal status of the production and consumption processes.

Whereas meat is still subjected to the most stringent religious requirements, E-numbers are also emerging as a concern in both countries, where, for the most part, consumers put a lot of thought and effort into their everyday shopping practices. Many of my informants were convinced that kosher and halal are not only 'spiritually' healthier but also 'physically' healthier and more wholesome for various reasons, including blood draining (which is perceived to make meat healthier) and pork avoidance (as pork contains cholesterol and bacteria). Thus, halal authority is inseparable from health concerns.

The views of the Ahmadiyya mission in Denmark, which also has a major congregation in London, where the Danish Ahmadiyya imam studied, are illustrative of debates about what Islam/halal is or ought to be – and a rejection of what is seen as excessive authority in the market for halal. Thus, Ahmadis avoid judging the halal/haram consumption patterns of others and, consequently, they do not engage in the competition that arises between material and shallow forms of religiosity. Moreover, the mission does not engage in business and what it considers overly commercialised forms of religion and unnecessary Muslim dogma; some halal consumers in the UK have voiced similar views.

Much of the halal meat sold in local and national retail outlets across the UK is not marked by halal logos, which is similar to the situation in Denmark but for different if related reasons. To complicate matters further, religious slaughter without stunning, which is allowed in the UK (unlike in Denmark), has prompted intense competition between certification bodies over the qualities ascribed to meat from stunned and unstunned animals throughout the production and manufacturing processes. Because halal slaughter without stunning is allowed in the UK, Muslim certifying bodies claim authority through halal by advocating for meat from either stunned or unstunned animals and for halal commodities in general.

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