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Book Review: **Shariah and the halal industry** by Mohammad Hashim Kamali, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021, 312 pp., £64.00 (hardback), ISBN: 9780197538616

John Lever

In his new book, Mohammad Hashim Kamali fills a gap in an often-overlooked area in the literature on the global halal market. *Shariah and the Halal Industry* is a scholarly yet highly accessible text exploring the ways in which Islamic jurisprudence and law can better underpin the foundations and ongoing development of the halal industry. This is a useful and well-thought-out book. Split into three parts, the introduction is followed by twenty-six chapters, including the conclusion, and there are four appendices and a glossary. The first part on shariah perspectives lays the knowledge base for the book through a detailed exploration of key shariah principles. This is followed by two more shorter sections, firstly on the emergence of the halal market in Malaysia, and secondly on market development in other regions. Perceptions of what constitutes halal vary among scholars and different schools of Islamic legal thought across minority and majority Muslim contexts, and throughout Kamali explores the ways in which knowledge of shariah can enable better understanding of halal and of the many challenges presented by market expansion.

In the first part of the book, Kamali delves into the conceptual definition of a range of interrelated subjects, from the permissible (halal, *mubah*, *ja'iz*), the prohibited (*haram*, *mahzur*, *mashbuhat*) and those things—for example, food additives, GMOs and chemical enhancers—that now fall into grey areas (*al-mashbuhat*). *Haram* is a key element of this

section, and it is central to understanding the book. Here, Kamali looks at definitions and classifications of *haram*, the severity of transgressions, and the ways in which shariah can address and shed light on new complexities. This not only lays the foundations for the novice to examine the emergence of the halal market in subsequent sections; it also enables enhanced understanding of the challenges brought about by market expansion through discussion and elaboration of key shariah principles.

A key argument of the book is that greater knowledge and application of shariah can further the development of halal into new areas, and that this will require 'greater synchrony between religion and science, market know-how, and better cooperation among the major players and resource providers.' The first part of the book closes with a focus on Islam and science through discussions of stunning and slaughter practice, vaccines, and GMOs, as well as some welcome but challenging reflections into the environmental impact of meat eating. Kamali recognizes that the centrality of animal slaughter in the halal agenda is thought-provoking in this context, and he argues that this is where synchrony should 'be pursued through all valid shariah means.'

Part 2 of the book explores market development in Malaysia through 4 key phases—halal standards, certification, halal parks, and the halal pharmaceuticals sector. For someone who has visited and researched halal in Southeast Asia, this part of the book complements the literature nicely, providing useful insights into the philosophical and practical basis of the development of halal standards and certification in relation to the application of key shariah principles. While outlining the key infrastructural and legal foundations of the halal industry in Malaysia, Kamali rightly observes that the Malaysian piecemeal approach to market expansion largely takes shariah for granted, which, he correctly argues, presents problems

internationally. 'Without formulating credible shariah parameters for general and sector-based applications', he argues further that there is 'a risk of the gap between the theory and practice of halal getting wider.' This part of the book finishes with some critical reflection on evident disparities in the management of halal, and on the issue of state fatwas (legal rulings) in matters of permitted and prohibited foodstuffs in relation to key ethical issues, including DNA and the environment.

Part 3 of the book reviews the development of the halal industry in the wider ASEAN region, and in Indonesia, Japan and New Zealand, for example, as well as in various European countries. The focus here is on imported meat and tourism and how younger halal consumers are driving the market growth globally. There is also an interesting discussion on halal phobia and reputational risk, where fears about the implementation of shariah in Muslim minority contexts, and non-compliance risks for brands within global supply chains, are usefully explored in relation to the authority of different Islamic schools of thought (*madhabs*). As Kamali puts it: 'Halal scandals involving individual firms may cast an entire industry into disrepute, just as positive publicity may enhance the industry's halal reputation.' The section concludes with a call for collective halal reputation management.

In the conclusions, Kamali outlines the challenges facing the halal industry when shariah is considered alongside the quest for standardization, and some useful recommendations are presented to facilitate debate and promote uniformity in halal standards. Better collaboration is key and Kamali advises that the leading *madhabs* should narrow difference between interpretations of halal via the *fiqh* method of piecing together (*talfiq*) different rulings. In consolidating the views of specific schools and populations across minority and majority contexts, halal councils and regulatory measures for *fatwas* are also proposed.

Given the politics of halal in some Western countries these suggestions seem ambitious, and it may prove difficult to move beyond existing relations embedded in global supply chains. More promising are ideas for culturally different approaches to halal to have their shariah-compliance scrutinized.

Better labelling to avoid ambiguity and communicate important information on purity, health and safety, for example, could potentially address the concerns of increasingly discerning costumers, Kamali proposes, while improving halal penetration; governments, *fiqh* academies, Muslim scholars and scientists could also play a key role reducing meat consumption through the development of fresh shariah viewpoints.

Throughout this valuable book, the focus on applying shariah over and above the priority given to the market is a welcome and worthwhile distraction. It will undoubtedly serve as a valuable resource for those wishing to navigate the global market, but in an age of market fundamentalism, it will also pose as many questions as it answers. Even so, it provides important foundations on which the halal industry's contribution to wider global debates can be assessed and taken forward.