

NAVIGATING TRADITIONS AND MODERNITY: THE DEVELOPMENT OF HALAL STANDARDS PROJECT IN THE GAMBIA

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Master's Study program of Islamic Studies at the Faculty of
Islamic Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (M.A)**



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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores how the Gambia Standards Bureau navigates the intersection of tradition and modernity in halal regulation and the global standardization of halal certification. The study focused on the role of the Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB) in standardization of halal in The Gambia. it examines how state agency of TGSB incorporate international standards such as those of the OIC/SMIIC halal standards into a society where halal has historically been governed by informal religious authority. The researcher employed a qualitative case study through conducted an interviews and document analysis. The findings reveal how halal standardization and certification have evolved into a technoscientific and bureaucratic process, shifting the monopoly of halal authority from local Islamic scholars to the administrative and technical apparatus of the state. The study situates this transformation within broader theoretical frameworks of globalization, institutional isomorphism, moral economy, and *maslahah*, arguing that halal governance in The Gambia reflects a hybrid model shaped by political pluralism, religious prerogatives, and the country's economic development dimensions. This thesis fills a gap in broader discussions within halal studies by offering the first in-depth institutional analysis of halal standardization in The Gambia, the Islamization of knowledge, religious commodification, and the bureaucratization of halal governance by the Gambia Standards Bureau.

Keywords: *Halal Standardization, The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB), Islamic Technoscience, Moral Economy, Institutional Isomorphism and Maslahah*

ملخص

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ماجستير في الدراسات الإسلامية

الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية في إندونيسيا

تستكشف هذه الأطروحة كيف ينتقل مكتب معايير غامبيا في تقاطع التقاليد والحداثة في تنظيم الحلال والتوحيد العالمي لشهادات الحلال. ركزت الدراسة على دور مكتب معايير غامبيا (TGSB) في توحيد الحلال في غامبيا. يدرس كيف تدمج الوكالة الحكومية للمجلس معايير دولية مثل معايير الحلال لمنظمة التعاون الإسلامي / SMIIIC في مجتمع كان فيه الحلال تاريخيا محكومة بسلطة دينية غير رسمية. استخدم الباحث دراسة حالة نوعية من خلال إجراء المقابلات وتحليل الوثائق. تكشف النتائج كيف تطور توحيد الحلال وإصدار الشهادات إلى عملية علمية وبيروقراطية تقنية، وحولت احتكار سلطة الحلال من علماء المسلمين المحليين إلى الجهاز الإداري والتقني للدولة. تضع الدراسة هذا التحول ضمن أطر نظرية أوسع للعولمة، والتمائل المؤسسي، والاقتصاد الأخلاقي، والمصالحة، بحجة أن الحوكمة الحلال في غامبيا تعكس نموذجاً هجيناً شكلته التعددية السياسية والامتيازات الدينية وأبعاد التنمية الاقتصادية للبلاد. تملأ هذه الأطروحة فجوة في المناقشات الأوسع نطاقاً في الدراسات الحلال من خلال تقديم أول تحليل مؤسسي متعمق لتوحيد الحلال في غامبيا، وأسلمة المعرفة، والتسليع الديني، وبيروقراطية الحوكمة الحلال من قبل مكتب معايير غامبيا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: *التقييس الحلال، مكتب الموصفات الجامبية (TGSB)، العلوم التكنولوجية الإسلامية، الاقتصاد الأخلاقي، التماثل المؤسسي والمصالح*

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Full Name</i>
<i>BPJPH</i>	: <i>Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal (Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency, Indonesia)</i>
<i>ESMA</i>	: <i>Emirates Standardization and Metrology Authority</i>
<i>FSQA</i>	: <i>Food Safety and Quality Authority (The Gambia)</i>
<i>GIC</i>	: <i>Gambia Islamic Council</i>
<i>GSIC</i>	: <i>Gambia Islamic Council</i>
<i>HCBs</i>	: <i>Halal Certification Bodies</i>
<i>ICDT</i>	: <i>Islamic Centre for Development of Trade</i>
<i>IIFA</i>	: <i>International Islamic Fiqh Academy</i>
<i>IHI</i>	: <i>International Halal Integrity Alliance</i>
<i>INCEIF</i>	: <i>International Centre for Islamic Finance Education</i>
<i>IIUM</i>	: <i>International Islamic University of Malaysia</i>
<i>JAKIM</i>	: <i>Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia)</i>
<i>MIRD</i>	: <i>Movement for Islamic Research and Da'wah</i>
<i>MOTIE</i>	: <i>Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (The Gambia)</i>
<i>MSG</i>	: <i>Monosodium System Glutamate</i>
<i>MUI</i>	: <i>Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Ulama Council)</i>
<i>OIC</i>	: <i>Organisation of Islamic Cooperation</i>
<i>SMIIC</i>	: <i>Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries</i>
<i>TGSB</i>	: <i>The Gambia Standards Bureau</i>
<i>TGSBI</i>	: <i>TGSBI</i>
<i>UIII</i>	: <i>Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia</i>
<i>WHFC</i>	: <i>World Halal Food Council</i>
<i>WTO</i>	: <i>World Trade Organisation</i>

FOREIGN TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Arabic</i>	<i>Full Name</i>
<i>Halal</i>	(حلال)	: Permissible or lawful in Islam.
<i>Haram</i>	(حرام)	: Forbidden or unlawful in Islam.
<i>Ulama</i>	(علماء)	: Islamic religious scholars
<i>Maslahah</i>	(مصلحة)	: Islamic concept referring to the public interest.
<i>Majlis</i>	(مجلس)	: Local Islamic educational circles
<i>Morikunda</i>		: Communities known for traditional Islamic education.
<i>Daras</i>		: Traditional rural Qur'anic schools.
<i>Tayyib</i>	(طيب)	: Pure and wholesome.
<i>Fiqh</i>	(فقه)	: Islamic jurisprudence
<i>Sharia</i>	(شريعة)	: Islamic Law.
<i>Tasmiya</i>	(تسمية)	: Recitation of "Bismillah".
<i>Wājib</i>	(واجب)	: Obligatory
<i>Mandūb</i>	(مندوب)	: Recommended
<i>Mubāḥ</i>	(مباح)	: Permissible
<i>Makrūh</i>	(مكروه)	: Disliked or discouraged
<i>Al-aṣl</i>	(الأصل)	: Principle of original
<i>Ṣūrat al-</i>	(سورة)	
<i>Baqarah</i>	(البقرة)	: Chapter 2

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1. Study Background

The global halal industry has emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing economic sectors, valued at over USD 2.3 trillion annually, excluding Islamic finance, and expanding at approximately 20% annually.¹ According to Md Siddique E Azam and Moha Asri Abdullah, the halal industry serves as a substantial new economic opportunity due to its massive scale and rapid expansion across diverse sectors and markets, with the global market growth estimated to reach an annual rate of 20 percent per annum.² This exponential growth extends beyond traditional food sectors to encompass pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, tourism, finance, and various service industries.³ The halal market is no longer limited to the boundaries of the food sector; instead, it has extended its scope to include cosmetics and pharmaceuticals, toiletries, and medical devices, as well as service sector components such as logistics, marketing, print and electronic media, packaging, branding, and financing.⁴ The global recognition of this economic potential is evidenced by non-Muslim countries' strategic participation, where Brazil, Australia, and Singapore were among the top ten countries in the halal food sector according

¹ Md Siddique E Azam and Mohaasri Abdullah, 'Global Halal Industry: Realities and Opportunities', *International Journal of Islamic Business Ethics* 5, no. 1 (2020): 47–59, <https://doi.org/10.30659/ijibe.5.1.47-59>; Mohammad Kabir Hassan et al., 'Integrating Islamic Finance and Halal Industry: Current Landscape and Future Forward', *International Journal of Islamic Marketing and Branding* 6, no. 1 (2021): 60, <https://doi.org/10.1504/ijimb.2021.117594>.

² Azam and Abdullah, 'Global Halal Industry: Realities and Opportunities', p.47–59.

³ Syafiq. Hasyim, *The Halal Project in Indonesia : Shariatization, Minority Rights and Commodification*, in *Trends in Southeast Asia*, ed. Choi Shing Kwok et al. (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2023); Florence Bergeaud-Blackler, 'Islamizing Food: The Encounter of Market and Diasporic Dynamics', in *Halal Matters: Islam, Politics and Markets in Global Perspective*, ed. John Lever et al. (Routledge, 2016); Azam and Abdullah, 'Global Halal Industry: Realities and Opportunities'.

⁴ Azam and Abdullah, 'Global Halal Industry: Realities and Opportunities'; Harun Sencal and Mehmet Asutay, 'Rethinking Halal: Hegemony, Agency, and Process', in *Rethinking Halal: Genealogy, Current Trends, and New Interpretations*, ed. Ayang Utriza Yakin and Louis-Leon Christian (BRILL, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004459236_003.

to the 2017–2024 Global Islamic Economy Indicator (GIEI) report, despite being non-Muslim-majority countries in the world.⁵

For Muslim-majority countries like The Gambia, where approximately 95% of the 2.4 million population, according to The Gambia Bureau of Statistics 2024 census, identifies as Muslim,⁶ this presents unprecedented opportunities for economic development while maintaining religious authenticity. The underlying economic fundamentals supporting this opportunity include a growing consumer base. As of 2023, the global Muslim population is estimated at 2.18 billion, comprising approximately 28.26% of the world's population.⁷ Muslim-majority countries have seen per capita GDP rise from USD 1,763 in 1993 to USD 10,728 in 2015, with the collective GDP of 57 OIC member countries estimated at USD 27.9 trillion.⁸ The intersection of traditional Islamic practices with modern halal standardization creates a unique dynamic that shapes both social customs and economic life in contemporary Gambian society.⁹

Islam has been present in the Senegambia region for over seven centuries,¹⁰ with The Gambia developing deeply rooted syncretic religious practices that blend Islamic principles with indigenous customs.¹¹ By the nineteenth century, Islam had

⁵ Azam and Abdullah, 'Global Halal Industry: Realities and Opportunities', p.47–59; Reuters Thomson, *State of the Global Islamic Economy Report*, An Inclusive Ethical Economy (Thomson Reuters, 2018), p.1-110; DinarStandard, *State of the Global Islamic Economy Report* (2024), <https://www.dinarstandard.com/post/state-of-the-global-islamic-economy-report-2023/2024>.

⁶ K Ceesay and K L Sonko, 'Integrating Islamic Environmental Ethics into Basic Education Curricula in The Gambia for a Sustainable Environment', *TARBIYA: Journal of Education in Muslim Society* 11, no. 2 (2024): 159–78, <https://doi.org/10.15408/tjems.v11i2.42072>; GBOS, *The Gambia 2024 Population and Housing Census Preliminary Report* (GAMBIA BUREAU OF STATISTICS, 2024), 1–25.

⁷ Pew Research Center, *The Future of the Global Muslim Population* (Pew Research Center, 2023); Azam and Abdullah, 'Global Halal Industry: Realities and Opportunities', p.47–59.

⁸ Dian Okta Yoshinta et al., 'Integrating Human Resource Development and Halal Tourism Strategies for Sustainable Development in Indonesia', *Technium Soc. Sci. J.* 62 (2024): 195; DinarStandard, *State of the Global Islamic Economy Report*.

⁹ Marloes Janson, "'How, for God's Sake, Can I Be a Good Muslim?': Gambian Youth in Search of a Moral Lifestyle", *Ethnography* 17, no. 1 (2016): 22–46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138115575655>.

¹⁰ Bala Saho, 'Islam in West Africa: Diffusion and Growth', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Islam in Africa* (Springer, 2020), Google Books; Assan Sarr, *Islam, Power, and Dependency in the Gambia River Basin: The Politics of Land Control, 1790-1940* (University of Rochester Press, 2016), p.1-244.

¹¹ Sulayman S. Nyang, 'Islamic Revivalism in West Africa: Historical Perspectives and Recent Developments', in *Religious Plurality in Africa*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona and Sulayman S. Nyang (Mouton de Gruyter, 1993); Momodou Darboe, 'The Gambia: Islam and Politics', in *Political*

become the dominant faith in The Gambia,¹² transforming spiritual life and social institutions while absorbing certain pre-Islamic traditions.¹³ Even under colonial rule, Islamic authorities such as local marabouts and Quranic teachers continued to oversee community life,¹⁴ including compliance with Islamic dietary laws through informal, community-based mechanisms rather than formal certification regimes.¹⁵ The concept of halal, as explained by Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, means "permissible, where prohibition has been removed and the Lawgiver has granted permission."¹⁶ The concept of halal is rooted in primary Islamic sources, the Qur'an, Hadith, and Fiqh, which guide nearly every aspect of Muslim lifestyles beyond ritual worship, including everyday actions such as eating, drinking, and trading.¹⁷ Over generations, Islamic scholars and community leaders have taught and reinforced these norms, embedding halal observance as a fundamental aspect of Gambian Muslim identity through traditional authority structures and community consensus.¹⁸

Despite the global expansion of the halal industry and The Gambia's strategic position as a Muslim-majority country,¹⁹ there are limited existing studies

Islam in West Africa State Society Relations Transformed, ed. William F.S. Miles (Lynne Rienner, 2007), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781626371187-007>.

¹² Sulayman S. Nyang, 'A Contribution to the Study of Islam in the Gambia', *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*; 25, no. 2 (1977): 125; Assan Sarr, *Islam, Power, and Dependency in the Gambia River Basin : The Politics of Land Control, 1790-1940* (University of Rochester Press, 2016), p.1-244.

¹³ Marloes Janson, 'Islam, Youth, and Modernity in the Gambia: The Tablighi Jama'at', *Cambridge University Press*, Cambridge University Press, 1 January 2013, 1–256, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139629133>; Erin Pettigrew, *Invoking the Invisible in the Sahara: Islam, Spiritual Mediation, and Social Change* (Cambridge University Press, 2023), 159:p.1-350.

¹⁴ Burama LJ Jammeh, *Curriculum Policy in Perspectives: Curriculum Policy Making A Study of Teachers' and Policy-Makers' Perspectives on The Gambian Basic Education Programme* (Scholars Press, 2015), <https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.5555/2886121>; Nyang, 'Islamic Revivalism in West Africa: Historical Perspectives and Recent Developments'; Marloes Janson, 'Living Islam through Death: Demarcating Muslim Identity in a Rural Serahuli Community in the Gambia', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17, no. 1 (2011): 100–115.

¹⁵ Betania Kartika and Kawsu Sanneh, 'An Overview of the Halal Industry in the Gambia with Islamic Perspective: Challenges and Opportunities', *Religious and Social Studies* 2, no. 02 (2022): 35–46.

¹⁶ Yusuf Al-Qardawi, *Al-Halal Wa al-Haram Fi al-Islam* (Maktabah Wahbah, 1993), p.15.

¹⁷ Febe Armanios and Boğaç A. Ergene, *Halal Food: A History* (Oxford University Press, 2018); Hasyim, *The Halal Project in Indonesia : Shariatization, Minority Rights and Commodification*.

¹⁸ Kartika and Sanneh, 'An Overview of the Halal Industry in the Gambia with Islamic Perspective'.

¹⁹ Foday Yaya Foday, 'An Exploratory Study of Opportunities for Halal Tourism in The Gambia; the Perceptions of Stakeholders on the Destination', *Journal of Islamic Tourism* 4 (2024): 3–40; J

discussing the relationship between traditional halal practices and modern standardization efforts. Recently, The Gambia Standards Bureau and its line ministry of trade in The Gambia have pursued halal industry development as an economic strategy, adopting international standards such as those of the OIC's Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC) and encouraging local businesses to enter global halal markets.²⁰ This standardization can be characterized as a new phenomenon on an existing moral economy where religious permissibility has historically been governed through community-based mechanisms.²¹ According to Trade Minister Joof's speech at the World Halal Forum in Istanbul 2024, the exposition serves as an optimal platform for member nations to collaborate effectively and maximize the benefits that the halal industry provides to young Muslim business owners.²² Minister Joof highlighted that the halal sector creates numerous commercial possibilities across multiple industries including food and beverages, financial services, tourism, fashion, pharmaceuticals, media, entertainment, healthcare, and education.²³

The ministry of trades of The Gambia push to develop the halal industry for the economy reflects an effort to integrate The Gambia into the global halal trade, valued in the trillions of dollars, by branding national products and services as ethically sound and religiously compliant.²⁴ This, on the other hand, can be interpreted as the contemporary commodification of Islam, with religious values leveraged as economic assets for both devout and pragmatic purposes, which Greg

Aboah et al., 'Going Local or Global? An Economic Feasibility Assessment of Establishing a Halal Slaughterhouse in the Gambia', in *ILRI. Physiology or Medicine*, Report 112 (International Livestock Research Institute, 2022).

²⁰ MOTIE, 'Trade Minister Highlights Innovation and Sustainability at World Halal Standards Day 2025', Institution, The Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration, and Employment, 2025, <https://motie.gov.gm/news/trade-minister-highlights-innovation-and-sustainability-at-world-halal-standards-day-2025/>; Mariatou Ngum, 'Gambia to Explore Halal Trade, Commits to Ethical Practices', *Gambia Daily* (Banjul, The Gambia), 2024.

²¹ Johan Fischer, 'Technoscience and Globalized Moral Economies', *Globalizations* 19, no. 7 (2022): 1054–67, world.

²² MOTIE, 'Trade Minister Highlights Innovation and Sustainability at World Halal Standards Day 2025'; Mariatou Ngum, 'Trade Ministry Committed to Support Stakeholders to Promote Halal Industry in Gambia', *The Alkamba Times* (Banjul, The Gambia), 2024.

²³ Mariatou Ngum, 'Trade Ministry Committed to Support Stakeholders to Promote Halal Industry in Gambia', News, *The Standard Newspaper* (The Gambia), 2024; MOTIE, 'Trade Minister Highlights Innovation and Sustainability at World Halal Standards Day 2025'.

²⁴ Mariatou Ngum, 'Trade Ministry Commits to Developing Halal Industry in Gambia', *The Gambina News Agency* (Banjul, The Gambia), 2024.

Fealy characterizes as part of a broader phenomenon he terms 'consuming Islam,' where Islamic symbols and practices are increasingly commodified within political and market systems."²⁵

Scholarly analysis of halal certification and standardization in The Gambia remains severely limited. Much existing literature on Islam in The Gambia focuses on other themes, such as Sufi orders and Islamic education, conversion movements, or the intersection of Islam and politics, rather than on halal trade or regulation.²⁶ Only a handful of writings have touched on halal-related issues, for example, discussing the potential of halal tourism or documenting traditional halal food practices, and these studies tend to take an economic opportunity perspective rather than examining state agency regulatory frameworks.²⁷ Most critically, no comprehensive research has analysed how Gambian government institutions, in collaboration or tension with religious bodies, are managing the formalization of halal standards. The role of The Gambia Standards Bureau in regulating halal standards in The Gambia, particularly in relation to halal bureaucratic settings within the TGSB and ulama within the TGSB sharia committee, remains underexplored in academic literature. Understanding how normative halal practices are shifting to contemporary halal governance is also an underexplored area of research.

Gambian society is widely described as culturally and religiously conservative, where informal halal practices guided by local Islamic scholars (ulama) and community norms have long served as the de facto standard.²⁸ For

²⁵ Greg Fealy, 'Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia', in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), p.15, <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812308528-006>.

²⁶ Darboe, 'The Gambia: Islam and Politics', p.129-160; Nyang, 'A Contribution to the Study of Islam in the Gambia', p.126; Janson, 'Islam, Youth, and Modernity in the Gambia: The Tablighi Jama'at', 1-256; Saho, 'Islam in West Africa: Diffusion and Growth', p.149-162.

²⁷ Yaya Foday, 'An Exploratory Study of Opportunities for Halal Tourism in The Gambia; the Perceptions of Stakeholders on the Destination'; Kartika and Sanneh, 'An Overview of the Halal Industry in the Gambia with Islamic Perspective'.

²⁸ Roman Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth-Century Africa* (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p.560, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/7A8EDCA1920881735425AB6C862963F1/termsfuse,availableathttps://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.Downloadedfromhttps://www.cambridge.org/core.Universityof>.

example, The Supreme Islamic Council operates under the joint authorization of the Government of The Gambia and the central bank to regulate Islamic banking activities as sharia advisory, while section 4 mandates that each Islamic bank appoint its own Sharia supervisor.²⁹ This shows that contemporary Islamic scholars in The Gambia are open to supporting the phenomenon of modern Islamization of knowledge in diverse fields such as commercial sharia compliance. This legacy of Islamizing goods and services, combined with strong grassroots halal observance, means that modern efforts to introduce official standards interact with a population that already attaches great importance to halal compliance.

This thesis seeks to fill the gap by navigating tradition and modernity in the development of halal standards by The Gambia Standard Bureau (TGSB). The research digs on how tradition and modernity coexist and mutually reinforce halal practices and economic development within TGSB department. This thesis argues that contrary to Foad Mami's contestation that tradition and modernity are two cronies that are simultaneously counterproductive and coercive for African communities,³⁰ because in contemporary Gambian society these forces actually coexist and mutually reinforce modern halal practices and economic development.³¹ The interplay between traditional Islamic practices and modern Muslim lifestyles significantly shapes social customs and economic life in Muslim-majority societies.³² This dynamic creates an environment where both traditional and modern influences are present and often intertwined. The resulting cultural landscape offers valuable insights into how Muslim-majority countries can successfully integrate into global halal markets while preserving their religious and cultural authenticity.³³

²⁹ Mohd Faisol Ibrahim et al., 'Comparative Analysis of Regulation and Supervision of Islamic Banking between Malaysia and Gambia', *Labuan E-Journal of Muamalat and Society* 11 (2017): p.51–58.

³⁰ Fouad Mami, 'Between Modernity and Tradition: African Identity in a State of Transition', *University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series*, no. 01 (2011): 73–82.

³¹ Adama Bamba et al., 'Halal Food in Multi African Society and Muslim Christian Relations Formation: A Strategic Vision in Political and Economic Dimension', *Humanities and Social Sciences Review* 7, no. 1 (2017): 81–94.

³² Masooda Bano, *Modern Islamic Authority and Social Change, Volume 1: Evolving Debates in Muslim Majority Countries* (Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p.272.

³³ Janson, 'Islam, Youth, and Modernity in the Gambia: The Tablighi Jama'at', 1–256.

1.2. Objective of the Study

This research examines how The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB) develops and implements halal certification standards as the primary state agency responsible for halal regulation in The Gambia. The study focuses on how TGSB navigates the institutional challenges of adopting international halal standards while managing limited resources and local religious considerations. In essence, the research asks how a predominantly Muslim society with deeply ingrained halal customs responds when the government introduces formal certification and regulatory structures. To assess the impact of global standards on local halal practices. By using The Gambia as a case study, the thesis offers a window into the broader phenomenon of how Muslim-majority communities balancing the demands of religious tradition with the imperatives of modernization and economic globalization in the halal sector.

1.3. Research Questions

This study addresses critical questions from existing studies mentioned in the background and the above objective. This thesis aims to answer these questions as follows:

1. How does The Gambia navigate between traditional halal practices and modern standardized halal certification frameworks in its pursuit of global market integration?
2. What historical and sociocultural factors have shaped halal practices in The Gambia?

1.4. Literature Review

Scholars agree that halal certification is now shaped more by industrial and technoscientific demands than by traditional religious oversight, raising debates about the commodification of Islam and shifting religious authority. This transformation has generated significant discussion about the commodification of religious practice, marginalisation of traditional Islamic scholars (Ulama), and the reconfiguration of religious authority in modern contexts.

The forthcoming literature review across diverse contexts reveals recurring themes of authority marginalization in halal governance, examining both global patterns and the specific local context of The Gambia. The pattern used emerged

from across Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and The Gambia, as well as Muslim-minority settings like France and Belgium. These study themes argue on the shift from traditional ulama oversight to technoscientific validation, while also examining how different religious communities experience marginalization through various governance mechanisms from shariatization concerns among religious minorities to bureaucratic displacement of traditional religious authority. The literature demonstrates how halal regulation becomes a focal point for broader struggles over national identity, secular versus religious governance, and communal boundaries, illustrating the complex dynamics of halal standardization in both global and local contexts.

Globally, the literature on halal certification and standardisation demonstrates how modern halal governance has moved beyond traditional jurisprudence to become intertwined with state bureaucracy, science, and market forces. Florence Bergeaud-Blackler argues that contemporary halal standards did not simply evolve from age-old religious authority but were forged by late-20th-century geopolitical and economic pressures.³⁴ Blackler and Ayang point to events like Ayatollah Khomeini's 1979 ban on imported meat in Iran as a political act asserting Islamic purity that paradoxically necessitated creating new Islamic slaughtering protocols and global certification networks.³⁵ In her analysis, Muslim-majority states (Iran, Saudi Arabia) and diaspora organisations in Europe stepped in to Islamize industrial meat supply chains, establishing halal certification systems geared towards global trade rather than local 'ulama oversight. This market-driven genesis of halal standards has, according to Bergeaud-Blackler, empowered food scientists and industry experts at the expense of classical religious scholars.³⁶ She is notably critical of food technologists like Mian Riaz and Muhammad Chaudry, whose popular manuals on halal procedures prioritize technical guidelines over

³⁴ Bergeaud-Blackler, 'Islamizing Food: The Encounter of Market and Diasporic Dynamics', in *Halal Matters Islam, Politics and Markets in Global Perspective*, ed. Florence Bergeaud-Blackler, John Lever, and Johan Fischer (Routledge, 2016), 91–104,

³⁵ Ibid.; Ayang Utriza Yakin, 'Halal Certification, Standards, and Their Ramifications in Belgium', *Rethinking Halal*, 2021, 153.

³⁶ Florence Bergeaud-Blackler, 'The Halal Certification Market in Europe and the World: A First Panorama', in *Halal Matters: Islam, Politics and Markets in Global Perspective* (Taylor and Francis Inc., 2015), 105–26, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315746128-7/>.

nuanced Islamic legal debate.³⁷ By simplifying centuries of jurisprudence into checklists for ingredients and slaughter, such “scholar-scientists” inadvertently marginalise the authoritative role of ‘ulama’. The limitation of her work, however, is its focus on the Euro-diasporic context and global market creation of halal; she powerfully illustrates the macro-level shifts in authority but does not examine how halal standardisation plays out in smaller postcolonial Muslim societies with minimal industrial infrastructure.

Echoing Blackler’s theme of technocracy, Ayang Utriza Yakin provides a detailed case study of halal governance in Belgium, a Muslim-minority, highly institutionalised setting. Yakin documents how Belgian Halal Certification Bodies (HCBs) have effectively transferred halal regulatory authority from traditional Islamic scholars to technical professionals, auditors, and state-affiliated experts.³⁸ He argued that in Belgium, halal certification has become a process obsessed with standardized protocols and laboratory testing, i.e., chemical analysis for trace alcohol or pork, rather than scholarly interpretation of scripture.³⁹ Yakin’s findings align with Johan Fischer’s in the context of Malaysia, a Muslim-majority country with a well-developed halal apparatus. Fischer shows that Malaysia’s government has institutionalised halal certification as part of its state apparatus, employing what he calls *Islamic technoscience* to bureaucratised halal production and trade.⁴⁰ Over the past few decades, Malaysia has become a global leader by integrating halal into state-led development plans, setting up certification agencies, accreditation schemes, and even halal laboratories.⁴¹ This techno-scientific turn, Fischer argues, fundamentally reshaped halal from a matter of informal trust and local clerical supervision into a formalized, auditable system of checklists, standards, and scientific testing.⁴²

To theorise these developments, S. Romi Mukherjee provides a broader critical lens. He argues that halal has transformed into an “agonistic field” of power

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Utriza Yakin, ‘Halal Certification, Standards, and Their Ramifications in Belgium’, p.153.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Johan Fischer, *Islam, Standards, and Technoscience In Global Halal Zones*. (Routledge, 2016).

⁴¹ Fischer, ‘Technoscience and Globalized Moral Economies’.

⁴² Ibid.

where economic, racial, and political forces intersect with religion.⁴³ Rather than viewing halal simply as a set of dietary laws, Mukherjee situates it amidst global debates on secularism, identity, and neoliberal capitalism.⁴⁴ This has made traditional Islamic scholars increasingly peripheral because of halal is treated as a technical compliance issue managed by corporate and government certifiers, while the ‘ulama’'s role in interpreting scripture is diminished. The agenda of pushing for a unified global halal standard often comes at the cost of local religious authority and interpretive diversity.⁴⁵ On the other hand, his work is mainly theoretical and focused on macro-level dynamics; it does not delve into specific national cases where resources and political histories might alter this balance. This gap becomes apparent when considering a country like *The Gambia*, which does not neatly fit the affluent technocratic model or the Western minority context that much of the existing literature covers.

Other scholars have investigated halal governance in politically charged environments. Syafiq Hasyim examines the politics of halal regulation in Indonesia, a Muslim-majority democracy where halal certification was recently transformed into state law.⁴⁶ Hasyim views Indonesia’s 2014 Halal Product Assurance Law as part of a broader “*shariatization*” trend, wherein Islamic law increasingly enters public policy.⁴⁷ He observes that President Jokowi’s government promoted mandatory halal certification not only as a consumer protection and economic measure but also as a nod to Islamic symbolism, effectively making halal an instrument of the state’s development agenda.⁴⁸ This move sparked anxieties among religious minorities in Indonesia, who feared that formalizing halal could entrench a Muslim-majoritarian vision of society and marginalize non-Muslim practices.⁴⁹ The limitation of Hasyim's study is that it centres on Indonesia, a large, middle-

⁴³ Romi S. Mukherjee, ‘Global Halal Meat, Money, and Religion’, *Religions* 5, no. 1 (2014): p.22.

⁴⁴ Azam and Abdullah, ‘Halal Standards Globally a Comparative Study of Unities and Diversities among the Most Popular Halal Standards Globally’ *Halalsphere* 1, no. 1 (2021): 11-31.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Hasyim, *The Halal Project in Indonesia: Shariatization, Minority Rights and Commodification*, p.1-29.

⁴⁷ Syafiq Hasyim, *The Shariatization of Indonesia: The Politics of the Council of Indonesian Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI)*, vol. 52 (Brill, 2023), p.6,

⁴⁸ Ibid., 52:p.459.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

income nation with significant bureaucratic capacity and a pluralist society. The dynamics of shariatisation and minority rights that Hasyim describes for Indonesia do not neatly apply to The Gambia, which has an overwhelmingly Muslim population and minimal internal opposition to Islamic norms.

In Muslim-minority contexts of the West, researchers have highlighted how halal becomes a flashpoint for identity politics and secular resistance. Guillaume D. Johnson, Kevin D. Thomas, and Sonya A. Grier provide a vivid example in their study of France's so-called "Quick halal" controversy.⁵⁰ When a French fast-food chain (Quick) introduced halal menus in certain outlets, it provoked what the authors term a "legitimation crisis" in public discourse.⁵¹ Their critical discourse analysis shows that segments of the French majority framed this move as an affront to Republican secular values and even a threat to national identity. They identify three recurring arguments used to delegitimize halal in this context: first, that "freedom" was under attack commentators claimed that offering halal options infringed the freedom of non-Muslim consumers or amounted to imposing religion in the public sphere; second, that "equality" was violated it was argued that Quick should cater "especially" to non-Muslims to avoid privileging one group, a stance portraying the halal menu as an unjust advantage for Muslims; and third, that halal was fundamentally "other" critics insisted that halal practices were foreign to French culture and belonged only in Muslim countries, not in secular France.⁵² These narratives cast halal food as a symbol of a parallel society, positioning French Muslims as outsiders within their own country. Johnson et al. conclude that debates over halal in France were never merely about food choices; instead, they were proxy battles over who gets to be entirely French, exposing how secularism can be invoked to police the boundaries of national belonging. This work illuminates the conflictual aspect of halal governance in highly contested minority settings.⁵³ Thus, the French case underscores halal's entanglement with identity and exclusion in

⁵⁰ Michelle C Johnson, 'Death and the Left Hand: Islam, Gender, and "Proper" Mandinga Funerary Custom in Guinea-Bissau and Portugal', *Cambridge University Press* 52, no. 2 (2009): p.59.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.23.

⁵² Guillaume D. Johnson et al., 'When the Burger Becomes Halal: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Privilege and Marketplace Inclusion', *Consumption Markets & Culture* 20, no. 6 (2017): p.22-23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2017.1323741>.

⁵³ Ibid., p.23.

secular states; it offers limited guidance for understanding a postcolonial African context where halal is widely accepted socially but historically under-institutionalised.

Only in the last few years has the Gambian state shown interest in formalising halal standards, starting from scratch to build what more developed countries have had for decades. Initial studies have only just begun to touch on this. Sanneh and Kartika outline the *opportunities and challenges* of developing a halal industry in The Gambia, noting the strong consumer demand in a 95% Muslim market and the potential economic benefits.⁵⁴ However, their work is mainly descriptive, advocating for halal institutions and international partnerships without examining the state's role or how these changes might affect local power dynamics and religious authority. Similarly, Yaya F. Drammeh explores halal tourism in The Gambia as a new niche for economic growth. He observes that Gambian tourism has long catered to European “sun and sand” travelers, and he argues that diversifying into *Muslim-friendly tourism* (with halal food, no alcohol, modest dress codes, and prayer facilities) could attract visitors from the Muslim world.⁵⁵ See the footnote. He notes that the country’s Islamic cultural heritage, if packaged correctly with “Islamically compliant food and drink, good moral behaviour, decent clothing, and praying facilities,” gives it a comparative advantage in appealing to Muslim travellers.⁵⁶ I agree that Drammen’s study is valuable for highlighting the economic potential of halal ventures, particularly in the private sector and marketing of halal tourism services. However, it does not examine regulatory frameworks or the role of ‘ulama’ (Islamic Scholars) in halal certification of The Gambia.

As established in the introductory chapter, the displacement of religious scholars is a main concern in halal governance. In the TGSB case, this shift is visible in the administrative process: interviewees from the Shariah Committee revealed they are consulted infrequently and operate on a voluntary basis, which signals institutional under-recognition. The literature reveals a fundamental

⁵⁴ Kartika and Sanneh, ‘An Overview of the Halal Industry in the Gambia with Islamic Perspective’, p.35-46.

⁵⁵ Yaya Foday, ‘An Exploratory Study of Opportunities for Halal Tourism in The Gambia; the Perceptions of Stakeholders on the Destination’, p.4.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.27.

transformation in halal governance where certification has shifted from traditional religious oversight to technoscientific governance systems. Florence Bergeaud-Blackler's seminal work demonstrates that modern halal standards did not simply evolve from age-old religious authority but were "forged by late-20th-century geopolitical and economic pressures." This represents a paradigm shift where food scientists and industry experts have gained authority at the expense of classical Islamic scholars ('ulamā'). Bergeaud-Blackler argues that the market-driven genesis of halal standards has empowered technologists who prioritize technical guidelines over nuanced Islamic legal debate, inadvertently marginalizing the authoritative role of traditional religious scholars.

A striking pattern across multiple contexts shows systematic displacement of Islamic scholars from halal certification processes. Ayang Utriza Yakin's detailed examination of Belgium's halal governance reveals how certification bodies have effectively transferred regulatory authority from traditional Islamic scholars to technical professionals, auditors, and state-affiliated experts. Yakin documents how halal certification has become "a process obsessed with standardized protocols and laboratory testing" rather than scholarly interpretation of Islamic scripture. This creates what the literature identifies as "technocratic displacement," where religious authority is systematically marginalized through the privileging of scientific validation over theological expertise.

The literature demonstrates that halal governance operates differently across various political and social contexts. Johan Fischer's Malaysian case study presents a more integrated model through his concept of "Islamization of knowledge," where Islamic theologians and technoscience are synthesized to oversee halal certification processes. Fischer suggests that successful halal governance emerges from collaborative frameworks that combine religious expertise with scientific validation, rather than allowing complete displacement. However, Syafiq Hasyim's analysis of Indonesia reveals how state-driven halal standardization serves broader shariatization agendas while simultaneously marginalizing traditional religious authorities who lack technical training in modern certification protocols. Muslim-minority settings such as France and Belgium face additional complexities of

identity politics and secular resistance, creating different dynamics of marginalization.

Within the specific context of The Gambia, existing scholarship remains predominantly descriptive and economically oriented. Studies by Sanneh and Kartika and Yaya Foday Drammeh primarily focus on market demand for halal certification and explore potential economic opportunities within The Gambia's emerging halal industry. However, these works do not systematically examine the institutional dynamics of halal governance or analyse how religious authorities are positioned within certification processes.

This study identifies a significant literature gap regarding how theologian marginalization manifests in contexts that diverge from established theoretical patterns. For example, in The Gambia's TGSB, the interview data reveal that the marginalization of Islamic theologians emerges neither from advanced technological displacement nor from minority community fears of state-imposed religious agendas. Instead, the data reveal that TGSB Sharia committee members fear being partially marginalized through the bureaucratization of imported halal standards a process where international frameworks are adopted wholesale through administrative compliance without meaningful integration of local religious expertise. This marginalization manifests in limited opportunities for the TGSB Sharia committee's Ulama in training and overseeing the sensitization of slaughterhouses for Sharia compliance, with committee members often working on a voluntary basis rather than being formally contracted or employed. Previous studies examined in this literature review have not addressed The Gambia Standard Bureau's role in regulating halal standards in The Gambia. This represents a distinct pathway of marginalization that challenges existing theoretical frameworks and reveals how administrative isomorphism can marginalize local religious authority even in Muslim-majority societies with strong Islamic institutions. The Gambian case demonstrates that marginalization can occur through bureaucratic rather than technological means, suggesting previously unexplored mechanisms of authority transfer in globalized religious governance systems.

1.5. Study Significant

This study is both timely and significant. It represents the first comprehensive academic examination of halal standardisation in The Gambia. Thereby filling a critical gap in the literature on Islam and halal regulatory governance in The Gambia. By documenting how The Gambia, where about 95% of citizens are Muslim, is transitioning from traditional, informal halal practices to formal certification systems. The research broadens the geographic scope of halal studies beyond the more commonly studied contexts of Southeast Asia and the Middle East. The Gambian case offers unique insights into the dynamics between religion and the state in a post-colonial Gambia. It illustrates how Islamic principles and institutions can be incorporated into modern state-led development efforts without marginalising local religious authority (Ulamas). The findings contribute to theoretical discussions on the commodification of religion and the negotiation between globalisation and local tradition. Practically, the study's insights may be helpful for policymakers and halal regulatory bodies in The Gambia. It highlights challenges such as maintaining religious credibility in certification, engaging local scholars in standard-setting, and building consumer trust in label issues that any country embarking on halal standardisation must address. Finally, this research not only enriches academic understanding of halal regulation in The Gambia. It also guides how halal standards can be developed to respect cultural-religious heritage while meeting international benchmarks.

1.6. Methodology of the Study

To achieve the aim and objectives of this research, the study employed a qualitative case study design, selecting The Gambia Standard Bureau (TGSB) as the case. Creswell defines case study design as involving sustained, in-depth analysis of specific bounded phenomena using multiple data collection methods over time.⁵⁷ This thesis examined the phenomenon of halal standardisation in The Gambia as a case to understand the role of TGSB, a state agency, in regulating halal standards in the country. The researcher focused on interviewing the main actors

⁵⁷ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 6th ed. (Sage publications, 2022), p.50.

within TGSB's halal department responsible for governing the halal standards, such as the head of the halal department, one certification officer, and two religious scholars comprising the chairperson of the Sharia committee and one Sharia board member.

In applying Creswell's definition, the researcher collected data for this study through multiple methods. First, the researcher conducted document analysis of books, published journal articles, newspaper articles, reports, and podcast YouTube interviews, as well as TGSB halal standards guidelines. The second method used was conducting in-depth interviews the informants for this study included The Gambia Standards Bureau personnel in the halal department, and Islamic scholars (ulama) involved in decision making to localise the OIC/SMIIC standards within The Gambia's TGSB. This qualitative data collection process enabled the researcher to use an interpretive approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how halal standardisation unfolds as TGSB regulation and a commodification strategy for religion prerogative and economic development dimension.

The researcher considered ethical considerations of qualitative methodology. As scholars argue that "researchers need to protect their participants and develop trust with them, promote the integrity of research".⁵⁸ The researcher applied the same ethical principles during and after conducting interviews and handling confidential documentary reports received from the TGSB. The interview is conducted through online WhatsApp phone calls. After this interview data collections, the researcher used the data to generate themes for analysis using Quirkos qualitative data analysis software. This helped the researcher outline patterns and themes, illuminating how halal standards, technoscientific standards, and traditional authority are implemented and negotiated by the state agency TGSB. This research is limited to The Gambia, where four participants were interviewed. This limited sample size was due to the small size of the halal department within The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB). Through these participants, the researcher

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.80.

was able to extract information that sheds light on the lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges of those directly involved in the halal certification initiative in The Gambia.

The four participants interviewed represent the complete institutional personnel within TGSB's halal department: the head of the halal department, one certification officer, and two Islamic scholars. These participants constitute the main decision-makers in localizing halal standards and are directly involved in halal standardization within TGSB, making this a comprehensive institutional analysis rather than a sample-based study. This approach aligns with John W. Creswell's emphasis on "sustained, in-depth analysis of specific bounded phenomena" rather than statistical representation.⁵⁹

Following Robert K. Yin's case study methodology, the strength of this research lies in its comprehensive coverage of the bounded system under investigation.⁶⁰ As Robert Stake argues, case study research prioritizes depth of understanding over breadth of coverage, making small but complete samples appropriate for exploratory institutional analysis.⁶¹ The data saturation was achieved not through numerical thresholds but through comprehensive engagement with all available institutional actors.

However, this study acknowledges several methodological limitations. The small sample size limits to four participants the scope of perspectives captured the voice institutional level only, particularly the community voice responses to halal standardization. Future research can expand to include Islamic religious leaders in both urban and rural Gambia, consumers, and private sector stakeholders such newly establish halal certification bodies to provide a more comprehensive view of the halal ecosystem. In addition to that, this study focus on institutional actors may have underrepresented grassroots community perspectives on these developments.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.50.

⁶⁰ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (SAGE Publications, 2017), p.46-52.

⁶¹ Robert E. Stake, 'Qualitative Case Studies', in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research, 3rd Ed* (Sage Publications Ltd, 2005).

1.7. Thesis Structure

The remainder of this thesis is organised into four main chapters. Chapter two provided a historical overview of halal practices in The Gambia, tracing the evolution from pre-colonial Islamic dietary norms and community-based authentication to the recent efforts toward formal certification. Chapter three examines the integration of modern scientific methods and standards into halal certification processes, analysing how local religious authorities (ulama) have engaged with technological and procedural innovations in verifying halal compliance. Chapter four investigates the influence of politics and governance on halal standards development, exploring how government institutions, laws, and policies shape the emerging certification regime (and how, in turn, debates over halal reflect broader questions of authority and identity in Gambian society). Finally, Chapter five concludes the thesis by synthesising the key research findings and discussing their implications. This concluding chapter also offers recommendations for the future development of halal certification in The Gambia and suggests areas for further research, while reflecting on the study's limitations. The thesis aims to build a cohesive narrative showing how The Gambia navigates traditions and modernity in pursuing a formal halal standard, contributing new knowledge to studying contemporary Islamic studies in The Gambia.

CHAPTER II

Historical Development of Halal Practices in The Gambia: From the Colonial to the Post-Colonial Era

2.1. Introduction

The development of halal practices in The Gambia can be traced back to the Islamic period in The Gambia and modern-day times during pre-colonial times. This chapter explores how these practices, traced back to the 11th century Islamic influences via trans-Saharan trade routes and Sufi missionary activities, shift over time while remaining integral to the Gambian Muslim identity. This analysis examines three milestones in the evolution of halal practices: the pre-colonial period, when Islamic dietary customs were institutionalized in communities; the colonial period, when British indirect rule allowed Islamic practices to continue largely unchallenged; and the post-independence era, during which state involvement in Islamic identity and halal regulation fluctuated. The evolution of this history cannot be understood without the involvement of Islamic pedagogy and clerical chains in transmitting and preserving halal information for decades. Starting from the 15th century, when education historian Burama Jammeh referred to the Morikunda communities, to the more recent 1992 establishment of the Supreme Islamic Council, Gambian society has always been governed by religious authorities as the primary actors to emerge with the custodianship of Muslim halal lifestyles in the country.

The chapter examines the impact of different political regimes on halal regulation in The Gambia. It discusses how Dawda Jawara's commitment to pluralism and secularism shaped governance, Yahya Jammeh's declaration of The Gambia as an Islamic Republic, and Adama Barrow's return to a more secular approach. These political transitions significantly influenced the official recognition and regulation of halal practices. This perspective highlights the ongoing struggle between top-down state governance and grassroots movements seeking to promote Islamic values in the context of modern halal industry development. Finally, the moral economy framework is used to analyse how communal ethics and religious authority have historically governed halal practices in The Gambia. This perspective foregrounds how religious norms and traditional

values were embedded in daily commercial and social life, even as colonial and postcolonial changes unfolded.

2.2. Arrival of Islam and Colonial Regulation of Muslim Affairs in The Gambia

Islam was introduced to the Senegambia region through trans-Saharan caravan and became firmly established by Sufi missionaries as early as the 11th century.⁶² In advance of Islam in the Senegambia in the 17th–18th centuries, the Sufi brotherhoods such as the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya played an important role in reinforcing Islamic practices including dietary laws through establishment of scholarly networks and rural Qur'anic schools (daras) in the region.⁶³ Consequently, Daras often referred to as Majlis known today traditional Islamic education became deeply embedded in Gambian Muslim communities. Historian Burama Jammeh reports that around 1751 there were approximately fifteen Muslim communities known as Morikunda across The Gambia areas that continue to serve as centers for traditional Islamic instruction.⁶⁴ These institutions (Majilis, Morikunda, or Dara) serve to teach and correct locals on conducting ritual slaughter according to Islamic principles, preventing non-Islamic methods. They also interpret Islam to discourage consuming pork and alcohol, and guide Muslims in integrating halal observance into their daily lifestyles.⁶⁵

⁶² Saho, 'Islam in West Africa: Diffusion and Growth'; F. Ngom, 'Islam in West Africa: Diffusion and Growth', *The Palgrave Handbook of Islam in Africa*, Springer Nature, 2020, p.149; Marloes Janson, 'Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa', *The Palgrave Handbook of African Colonial and Postcolonial History*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 28 January 2018, 951–77, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59426-6_38; Ralph A. Austen, *Trans-Saharan Africa in World History* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁶³ Zachary Valentine Wright, *Living Knowledge in West African Islam*, ed. Rüdiger Seesemann Knut Vikør and John Hunwick, vol. 18 (Brill, 2015); Knut S. Vikør, 'Pathways and Formations of "African Sufism"', in *Routledge Handbook of Islam in Africa* (Routledge, 2021); Raymond A. Adams, 'Muslim Brotherhoods and Social Change in Some Societies in West Africa.' (PhD Thesis, SOAS University of London, 1972); Elizabeth Sirriyeh, 'Sufi Thought and Its Reconstruction', *Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century*, 2004, 122–23.

⁶⁴ Burama L.J. Jammeh, 'Curriculum Policy in Perspectives: Curriculum Policy Making: A Study of Teachers' and Policy-Makers' Perspectives on The Gambian Basic Education Programme' (PhD Dissertation, University of Sheffield, 2012), p.1-360, Google Scholar; Obed Mfum-Mensah, 'Education and Communities at the "Margins": The Contradictions of Western Education for Islamic Communities in Sub-Saharan Africa.', *Bulgarian Comparative Education Society* 15 (2017): p.45-51.

⁶⁵ Lamin Sanneh, *The Crown and the Turban: Muslims and West African Pluralism* (Routledge, 2018), p.1-304, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429496721>.

The regulation of Muslim lifestyles in The Gambia has been deeply shaped by both colonial authorities and Muslim clerics, evolving through a dynamic interplay of sociocultural, religious, and political factors. Historically, the arrival of Europeans in West Africa, particularly the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, marked profound shift in power relations.⁶⁶ This encounter led to significant political and economic changes, especially as European interests redirected trade routes and disrupted existing Muslim networks.⁶⁷ As colonial powers, especially the British and French, established their dominance, they not only challenged the authority of Muslim leaders but also sought to transform the institutional and legal structures governing Muslim communities.⁶⁸

The British ended up controlling The Gambia. The colonial administration adopted a policy of indirect rule, co-opting existing Islamic and traditional authorities into the colonial state.⁶⁹ The establishment of the Muslim court in Bathurst in 1905 exemplified this strategy, as it was created to adjudicate family law and other civil matters central to both the maintenance of social order and the preservation of Islamic norms.⁷⁰ The British recognized the significance of Islam to Gambian society, however their engagement with Muslim institutions was marked by ambivalence.⁷¹ The colonial government supported the creation of mosques, Islamic schools, and courts to secure local legitimacy, it was also quick to intervene in religious affairs when colonial interests were threatened.⁷² For example, disputes over religious leadership or perceived moral failings such as the 1928 Bathurst

⁶⁶ John Milner Gray, *A History of the Gambia* (Cambridge University Press, 2015); Nyang, 'Islamic Revivalism in West Africa: Historical Perspectives and Recent Developments'.

⁶⁷ Sulayman S Nyang, 'Islam and Politics in West Africa', *Cambridge University Press* 13 (1984): 20–25; Nyang, 'Islamic Revivalism in West Africa: Historical Perspectives and Recent Developments'.

⁶⁸ Nyang, 'Islamic Revivalism in West Africa: Historical Perspectives and Recent Developments'; Nyang, 'A Contribution to the Study of Islam in the Gambia'.

⁶⁹ Satang Nabaneh, 'From Contemporary (Semi-Competitive) Authoritarian Regimes to Constitutional Democracies in Africa: Lessons from The Gambia' (University of Washington, 2024), p.1-196.

⁷⁰ Bala S. K. Saho, 'Islam, Gender, and Colonialism : Social and Religious Transformations in the Muslim Court of the Gambia, 1905--1970' (Doctorate Thesis Philosophy of History, Michigan State University, 2012), <https://doi.org/doi:10.25335/dqdk-ec80>.

⁷¹ Ibid.; Bala S. K. Saho, 'Appropriation of Islam in a Gambian Village: Life and Times of Shaykh Mass Kah, 1827–1936', *African Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (2011): 1–21.

⁷² Bala. Saho, *Contours of Change : Muslim Courts, Women, and Islamic Society in Colonial Bathurst, the Gambia, 1905-1965*, ed. Bala Saho (Michigan State University Press, 2018).

Mosque crisis often escalated into broader conflicts involving both the colonial state and Muslim elders, reflecting the fragile balance of religious and secular authority.⁷³

The Muslim court itself became an arena where issues of marriage, divorce, property rights, and personal status were debated and contested in The Gambia.⁷⁴ The records show that women, in particular, used the court system to challenge patriarchal norms and to pursue greater autonomy within their families, something that was made possible by the legal pluralism of colonial rule.⁷⁵ These opportunities were always circumscribed by the presence of colonial appellate courts, which could and did overrule decisions made according to Islamic law.⁷⁶ As Bala Saho research show, the colonial legal system was ultimately designed to serve the broader interests of British governance, rather than to realize an authentic Islamic legal order.⁷⁷ At the same time, the introduction of Western education and the promotion of missionary schools fostered a degree of cultural change which further complicated the relationship between Islam and colonial authority in The Gambia.⁷⁸

The influence of Muslim clerics also evolved under these pressures. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, religious authority in The Gambia was shaped by a complex interplay of Sufi orders, jihadist traditions, and the challenges posed by both colonial rule and postcolonial politics.⁷⁹ The colonial disruption of Muslim institutions, as Sulayman Nyang explained, the generated

⁷³ Saho, 'Islam, Gender, and Colonialism : Social and Religious Transformations in the Muslim Court of the Gambia, 1905--1970'.

⁷⁴ Alaine Hutson, 'Contours of Change: Muslim Courts, Women, and Islamic Society in Colonial Bathurst, the Gambia, 1905--1965, Written by Bala Saho', *Islamic Africa* 10, nos. 1--2 (2019): 216--18, <https://doi.org/10.1163/21540993-01001014>.

⁷⁵ Saho, *Contours of Change : Muslim Courts, Women, and Islamic Society in Colonial Bathurst, the Gambia, 1905-1965*.

⁷⁶ Saho, 'Islam, Gender, and Colonialism : Social and Religious Transformations in the Muslim Court of the Gambia, 1905--1970'.

⁷⁷ Saho, *Contours of Change : Muslim Courts, Women, and Islamic Society in Colonial Bathurst, the Gambia, 1905-1965*.

⁷⁸ Saho, 'Islam, Gender, and Colonialism : Social and Religious Transformations in the Muslim Court of the Gambia, 1905--1970'; Sarr, *Islam, Power, and Dependency in the Gambia River Basin : The Politics of Land Control, 1790-1940* (University of Rochester Press, 2016); Aboubacar Abdullah Senghore, 'Harnessing Traditional Governance Institutions to Improve Governance in West Africa-The', *CENMEDRA*, African Books Collective, 2018, 217.

⁷⁹ Nyang, 'Islamic Revivalism in West Africa: Historical Perspectives and Recent Developments'; Saho, 'Islam in West Africa: Diffusion and Growth'.

both accommodation and resistance among clerics.⁸⁰ The British rule allowed for some continuity of Islamic customs, it nevertheless prevented the full realization of Muslim self-governance and contributed to the fracturing of religious authority within Gambian society.⁸¹

2.3. Post-Colonial Regulation of Islam and Muslim Lifestyles in The Gambia

The colonial period in The Gambia, which lasted until independence from Great Britain in 1965, operated under a system of British indirect rule.⁸² In the postcolonial period, the legacies of colonial rule and the strategies of Muslim clerics continue to shape the regulation of Muslim life, including halal practices in The Gambia.⁸³ According to Momodou Darboe, after independence, Gambian leaders have frequently manipulated Islamic symbols for political gain, balancing between secularism and the religious sensibilities of a Muslim-majority population.⁸⁴ The Political figures, such as the former two Presidents Dawda Jawara and Yahya Jammeh, have both relied on their Muslim identity and adapted their approaches to Islam to fit the changing political context, reflecting the continuing intertwining of religion and statecraft in The Gambia.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, the diversity of Islamic practice ranging from Sufi traditions to more reformist movements influenced by external actors remains a hallmark of Gambian religious life and shapes contemporary debates over halal regulation and other aspects of Muslim practice in The Gambia.⁸⁶ The Gambia being a Muslim-majority country, former President Dawda Jawara championed a pluralistic state, avoiding overt Islamization to maintain harmony among its diverse ethnic and religious communities.⁸⁷ The 1994 coup marked a

⁸⁰ Nyang, 'Islamic Revivalism in West Africa: Historical Perspectives and Recent Developments'.

⁸¹ Ibid.; Nyang, 'Islam and Politics in West Africa'.

⁸² David Perfect, 'Politics and Society in The Gambia since Independence', *History Compass* 6 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2008.00513.x>.

⁸³ Shamil Jeppie et al., *Muslim Family Law in Sub-Saharan Africa: Colonial Legacies and Post-Colonial Challenges* (Amsterdam University Press, 2010); Richard Roberts, 'Muslim Family Law in Sub-Saharan Africa: Colonial Legacies and Post-Colonial Challenges', *Islamic Law and Society*, ahead of print, 1 January 2012, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156851912X639554>.

⁸⁴ Darboe, 'The Gambia: Islam and Politics'.

⁸⁵ Ibid.; David Harris and Sait Matty Jaw, 'A "New Gambia"? Managing Political Crisis and Change in an African Small State', *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 62, no. 1 (2024): 45–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14662043.2024.2308948>.

⁸⁶ Darboe, 'The Gambia: Islam and Politics'.

⁸⁷ Momodou Darboe, *Islamism and Secular State in The Gambia*, 47, no. 2 (2004): p.386-408; Abdoulaye Saine, 'Commissioned Report to The Gambia's Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations

decisive shift. Yahya Jammeh's regime (1994-2016) increasingly instrumentalized Islam for political legitimacy, culminating in the 2015 symbolic declaration of an Islamic Republic.⁸⁸ This move framed as a rejection of colonialism and assertion of African identity lacked constitutional implementation; The Gambia retained sovereign secular governance structures despite Jammeh's Islamizing rhetoric, which intensified public discourse on Islamic norms like halal observance.⁸⁹

Historically, local Islamic scholars and community leaders in The Gambia the regulation broader Muslim lifestyles including halal practices.⁹⁰ Jawara's administration largely preserved this decentralized approach, reflecting a form of institutional path dependence: once established, such arrangements tend to persist as they generate vested interests and cognitive frameworks resistant to change. This decentralized model allowed Islamic institutions to retain authority over religious affairs, while the state focused on secular administration, creating a moral economy in which religious and political authorities coexisted rather than competed.⁹¹

The establishment of the Gambia Supreme Islamic Council (GSIC) in 1992 marked a new stage, as it emerged as the apex Islamic authority, officially recognized by the government to coordinate Islamic affairs and promote unity among Gambian Muslims.⁹² There has been no comprehensive legislation to institutionalize the GSIC, it has nonetheless expanded its role especially in matters of halal regulation by collaborating with businesses and advising on halal products.⁹³ In the financial sector, both the government and the central bank have

Commission: 1994-2017 Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission.', *Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission*, 2020, p.205-220.

⁸⁸ Harris and Jaw, 'A "New Gambia"?'

⁸⁹ Darboe, 'The Gambia: Islam and Politics', p.129-160; Rainer Tetzlaff, 'Democratisation: Democracy Under Conditions of Poverty', in *Africa*, by Rainer Tetzlaff (Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2022), p.163-199, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-34982-0_9.

⁹⁰ B R Caselin, *Between Tradition, Islam & Modernity: Carving Bardic Modalities in Coastal Gambia*, 2012.

⁹¹ A.A. Senghore, 'The Judiciary in Governance in the Gambia: The Quest for Autonomy Under the Second Republic', *Journal of Third World Studies* 27, no. 2 (2010): 215-48.

⁹² GSIC, 'The Shura Council - Gambia Supreme Islamic Council (GSIC)', The Gambia Supreme Islamic Council (GSIC), 2023, <https://gsic.gm/governance/the-shura-council/>.

⁹³ Mohd Faisol Ibrahim et al., 'Comparative Analysis of Regulation and Supervision of Islamic Banking between Malaysia and Gambia'.

empowered the GSIC to oversee Islamic banking, requiring Islamic banks to appoint Shariah supervisors.⁹⁴

Historically, Islamic scholars and local leaders informally regulating Muslim lifestyle including halal in the Gambia communities.⁹⁵ Throughout the colonial era, the British permitted these practices to remain unregulated, fostering a system in which informal halal certification was based on trust. Post-independence, the Jawara government maintained the colonial legacy of the decentralisation approach.⁹⁶ This continuity reflects path dependence in institutional development once established, institutional arrangements tend to persist because they create vested interests and cognitive frameworks that resist change.⁹⁷ This decentralized model also illustrates what E.P. Thompson describes as a moral economy, where religious authority and halal regulation were governed not by formal law but by trust, tradition, and communal ethics.⁹⁸ Moreover, the principle of *maslahah* (public interest) was served through localized consensus rather than centralized state enforcement,⁹⁹ demonstrating a historically embedded form of Islamic governance that prioritised collective wellbeing over bureaucratic codification. The Gambia Supreme Islamic Council (GSIC), established in 1992, serves as the apex Islamic authority in The Gambia.¹⁰⁰ Tasked with preserving and advancing the interests of Islam and Muslims nationwide, the government-recognized GSIC coordinates Islamic affairs, promotes unity among Gambian Muslims, and addresses faith-related issues.¹⁰¹

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ David E. Skinner, 'The Incorporation of Muslim Elites into the Colonial Administrative Systems of Sierra Leone, The Gambia and the Gold Coast', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 29, no. 1 (2009): 91–108, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602000902726814>.

⁹⁶ Darboe, 'The Gambia: Islam and Politics'.

⁹⁷ Paul Pierson, 'Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics', *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 2 (2000): 251–67.

⁹⁸ Edward P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past & Present* 50, no. 1 (1971): 76–136, <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/50.1.76>.

⁹⁹ Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki and Nurdianawati Irwani Abdullah, 'Maqasid Al-Shari'ah, Maslahah, and Corporate Social Responsibility (2007)', *American Journal of Islam and Society* 41, no. 1 (2024): 10–35, <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v41i1.3417>; Mohammad Hashim. Kamali, *Tajdīd, Iṣlāḥ and Civilisational Renewal in Islam* (The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2018).

¹⁰⁰ GSIC, 'The Shura Council - Gambia Supreme Islamic Council (GSIC)'.

¹⁰¹ 'Gambia Islamic Council (GIC)', accessed 19 April 2025, <https://gsic.gm/about-us/history/>.

Grassroots halal practices have also been deeply shaped by local religious communities. The majlis tradition local religious circles and Qur'anic schools has been central to the dissemination and clarification of halal rules.¹⁰² Scholars running majlis schools provided foundational Islamic education and practical guidance, helping communities distinguish between halal and haram.¹⁰³ Despite the disruptions of colonialism, these communities remained steadfast in upholding halal principles and rejecting non-halal products. Building on this legacy, Islamic institutions today are increasingly working to develop a structured halal sector, seeking partnerships with international bodies and launching campaigns to raise local awareness about halal standards.¹⁰⁴

Current halal regulation in The Gambia aims to align the food and service sectors with Islamic principles. The Gambia Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA) is tasked with general food safety, but there remains a lack of a specific legal framework for halal products.¹⁰⁵ As a result, compliance is subject to differing interpretations among producers and consumers. In the absence of an official certification body, halal integrity depends heavily on the trustworthiness of food producers and importers.¹⁰⁶ Stakeholders are encouraged to seek certification from reputable international organizations to meet both Shariah and local safety standards.¹⁰⁷ The growing demand for halal products in supermarkets, restaurants, and hotels, there has been an increase in educational efforts to build consumer confidence.¹⁰⁸ However, challenges persist, including a lack of comprehensive data

¹⁰² Tal Tamari, 'Styles of Islamic Education: Perspectives from Mali, Guinea, and The Gambia', in *Islamic Education in Africa: Writing Boards and Blackboards* (Indiana University Press, 2016), <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03837413>.

¹⁰³ Kartika and Sanneh, 'An Overview of the Halal Industry in the Gambia with Islamic Perspective'.

¹⁰⁴ Yaya Foday, 'An Exploratory Study of Opportunities for Halal Tourism in The Gambia; the Perceptions of Stakeholders on the Destination'.

¹⁰⁵ Saineyta Joof et al., 'Assessment of Potable Water Quality Control Checks in the Gambia', *African Journal of Chemical Education* 14, no. 3 (2024): 92–112.

¹⁰⁶ Participant 3, 'Consideration of Madhab (Islamic Jurisprudential Schools) in Halal Certification in The Gambia', 2025, Online Interview.

¹⁰⁷ Ngum, 'Gambia to Explore Halal Trade, Commits to Ethical Practices'.

¹⁰⁸ Aboah et al., 'Going Local or Global? An Economic Feasibility Assessment of Establishing a Halal Slaughterhouse in the Gambia', p.1-50; Adama Bah and Harold Goodwin, *Improving Access for the Informal Sector to Tourism in The Gambia*, vol. 15 (Overseas Development Institute London, 2003),

on halal standards, limited mechanisms for regulatory compliance and supply chain transparency, and no dedicated halal education institution.

To end this chapter, we want to conclude that halal practice and regulations in The Gambia demonstrates remarkable resilience rooted in centuries-old Islamic institutions and grassroots religious authority. However, its regulation has been consistently shaped by political expediency from colonial manipulation to post-independence instrumentalization rather than systematic state policy. This has resulted in a persistent gap between the deep-seated cultural/religious importance of halal and the lack of formal, standardized national regulation, leaving it largely reliant on community trust and decentralized religious structures even today. This chapter two explored how informal halal practices were embedded in Gambia's socio-religious fabric through clerical authority, chapter three examines how these traditional norms are being reconfigured by globalized techno-scientific standards. This transition reflects the broader tension between inherited moral economies and institutional isomorphism in halal governance.

CHAPTER III

Islamic Techno-Science and Halal Dynamics in The Gambia

3.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the transformative role of Islamic techno-science in reshaping halal standardization and certification practices globally and within The Gambia. It argues that traditional Islamic religious norms are increasingly integrated with globalized techno-scientific validation systems. Drawing on John Fischer's conceptualization of halal certification as a form of technoscience wherein religious compliance is standardized this chapter explores how, in many Muslim-majority countries, state authorities regulate and enforce specific protocols to determine halal certification.

Through laboratory testing and bureaucratic oversight, this analysis investigates how Gambian institutions reconcile Islamic principles with the demands of modern markets. The central thesis is framed within the moral economy perspective, which helps reveal how stakeholders in The Gambia navigate the tensions between communal Islamic ethics and the commodification of halal.

While much previous scholarship has focused on Islamic banking or abstract theories of Islamization, this chapter addresses a critical gap by empirically analysing halal as a technoscientific field in the specific context of The Gambia. Unlike Southeast Asian models that emphasize high-tech laboratory infrastructure, The Gambia adopts administrative innovation to detect non-halal ingredients. This chapter also highlights the shifting authority over halal certification from local religious scholars to technocratic experts in international halal certification bodies.

Further, it explores how Islamic legal principles (fiqh) are embedded into national halal standards developed by the Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB), resulting in a hybrid framework of scriptural rulings and renewable certifications. The analysis includes the integration of Halal Critical Control Points (HCCPs) and supply-chain audits into regulatory practice, where sacred injunctions are translated into technical procedures.

Moreover, it investigates how halal becomes a reified, marketable asset reflected in certification logos, audit trails, and Muslim-friendly tourism initiatives

driven by global economic opportunities. The chapter also addresses critical challenges such as institutional capacity constraints, the struggle to harmonize with international standards such as OIC/ SMIIC and regulatory enforcement gaps that complicate the development of a functioning halal moral economy.

In summary, the chapter argues that The Gambia's halal landscape illustrates a profound double movement: the technoscientific standardization of religious practice facilitates participation in global markets but simultaneously risks marginalizing Ulama the religious scholars to be fully in cooperated of current TGSB's halal regulation. This dynamic exemplifies the broader challenge facing Muslim-majority societies as they seek to balance authenticity, communal trust, and modernity in an increasingly globalized world. The analysis employs an integrated theoretical framework, showing how globalization pressures and institutional isomorphism create internal tensions within local moral economies. These tensions, in turn, necessitate *maslahah*-based negotiations to sustain religious legitimacy while adapting to changing socio-economic conditions.

3.2. The Evolution of Halal: From Lexical Roots to Global Regulation

The term *halal* has undergone extensive lexical and legal analysis throughout Islamic scholarship, evolving from classical Arabic lexicography to contemporary jurisprudential discourse. Lexically, *halal* derived from the Arabic root ḥ-l-l is often defined in contrast to its antonym ḥarām.¹⁰⁹ The word carries metaphorical significance from the phrase ḥall al-ʿuqda ("untying of the knot"), and it fundamentally refers to that which is not forbidden.¹¹⁰

Classical lexicographers such as Ibn Manẓūr emphasize the theological dimension of this concept, asserting that all which Allah has permitted constitutes *halal*, while anything He has prohibited is *haram*.¹¹¹ Other authorities, including al-Zabidi, offer a more jurisprudential approach, defining *halal* as that for which one incurs no punishment.¹¹² Within Islamic legal theory, jurists have formulated

¹⁰⁹ Muḥammad Al-Ferozabadi, *Al-Qamus Al-Muḥīṭ* (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah, 1999), 3: p.493.

¹¹⁰ Muḥammad Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān Al-ʿArab* (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1994), 11: p.167.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Ḥusayn Al-Zabīdī, *Tāj Al-ʿarūs Min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs* (Bayrūt: Dār maktabat al-ḥayāt, 1999).

various definitions to capture the essence of *halal*. ‘Alī al-Jurjānī describes *halal* as all that which is not punished in its use and which the Sharia has explicitly permitted.¹¹³ Meanwhile, Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Thānawī offers a more source-specific definition, stating that *halal* refers to that which the Qur’an and Sunnah have permitted due to a lawful cause.¹¹⁴

However, contemporary scholars have critiqued al-Thānawī’s formulation for being overly narrow, as it fails to accommodate the broader classification of actions in Islamic jurisprudence including wājib obligatory, mandūb recommended, mubāḥ permissible, makrūh discouraged, and ḥarām prohibited.¹¹⁵ A more inclusive juristic definition has thus emerged: *halal* encompasses actions that fall within Sharia’s permitted domain, including not only what is neutral or encouraged, but even those acts deemed reprehensible so long as they remain legally allowable.¹¹⁶

Contemporary scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi contribute to this discourse by defining *halal* as “that which the knot of prohibition has been untied from, and which the Lawgiver has allowed to be performed.”¹¹⁷ This interpretation bridges theological permissibility with legal categorization, providing a functional framework for applying *halal* principles in modern contexts.

The relationship between *halal* and the broader Islamic legal framework must also be situated within the five primary rulings recognized by the majority of Muslim jurists:¹¹⁸

Wājib: an obligatory act, whose performance is rewarded, and omission is punishable.

¹¹³ ‘Alī Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb Al-Ta’rīfāt* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1997), p.66.

¹¹⁴ Muḥammad Alī al-Thānawī, *Kashshāf Ishlāḥāt Al-Funūn*, 1 (Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah, 1998), p.475.

¹¹⁵ Mohammed Zubair Butt Mufti, ‘Halal and Shariah Law’, in *The Halal Food Handbook*, ed. Yunes Ramadan Al-Teinaz et al. (Wiley Blackwell, 2020).

¹¹⁶ group of Wizārat al-Awqāf, *Al-Mawsū‘ah al-fiqhīyah* (Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, 2006), 18:74.

¹¹⁷ Al-Qardawi, *Al-Halal Wa al-Haram Fi al-Islam*, p.15.

¹¹⁸ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, ‘Methodological Issues in Islamic Jurisprudence’, *Arab LQ* 11 (1996): 3; Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2003), p.410.

Mandūb: a recommended act, rewarded if performed, but not punishable if omitted.

Mubāḥ: a neutral act, carrying no moral or legal consequence whether performed or not.

Makrūh: a discouraged act, which one is advised to avoid, though not legally prohibited.

Ḥarām: a strictly prohibited act, whose commission incurs punishment and avoidance earns reward.

These categories form the legal scaffolding through which *halal* must be understood—not merely as a binary of lawful versus unlawful, but as part of a nuanced ethical and legal continuum in Islamic thought.

The principle of the original norm (al-aṣl) provides crucial context for understanding *halal* within Islamic legal methodology.¹¹⁹ The majority position among Muslim jurists maintains that the normative ruling in cases where evidentiary texts remain silent is permission, establishing lawfulness (ḥilla) as the default position since all that which is not prohibited and does not attract punishment constitutes *halal*.¹²⁰ However, this general principle operates within several significant exceptions that restrict its scope. Such as meat consumption follows a prohibitive default (al-aṣl fī al-luḥūm al-ḥurma), requiring fulfilment of specific Islamic slaughter requirements for permissibility.¹²¹

In contrast, the contemporary definition of *halal* has expanded significantly in scope and practice. While its foundation remains, the principles established in the Qur'an and Sunnah, *halal* today is not limited to dietary law but extends to a broad array of products and services, including finance, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and logistics. *Halal* food is specifically defined as that which is

¹¹⁹ Muhammad Mustafa Al-Zuhayli, *Al-Qawā'id al-Fiqhiyya Wa Taṭbīqātuhā Fī al-Madhāhib al-Arba'a*, 2nd ed. (Dār al-Fikr, 2006), p.190.

¹²⁰ Abd Allāh Al-Duwaihi, *Qā'idat al-Aṣl Fī al-Aṣḥyā' al-Ibāḥa* (Ministry of Higher Education, Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, 2007), p.90; Zubair Butt, 'Halal and Shariah Law', p.30.

¹²¹ Abd al-Raḥman Al-Sa'di, *Al-Qawā'id al-Fiqhiyya: Al-Manẓuma Wa Sharḥuha* (Ministry of Endowments, 2007), p.128; Zubair Butt, 'Halal and Shariah Law', p.31.

“permitted according to Islamic dietary law,” excluding items such as pork, blood, carrion, alcohol, and any animal improperly slaughtered.¹²² Contemporary application is shaped by technological advances and global trade, requiring not just personal knowledge but also formal systems of halal certification to ensure products are free from contamination with haram substances throughout the entire production process.¹²³ International bodies such as the Codex Alimentarius and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC/SMIIC) have issued standardized guidelines for the use of the term halal, emphasizing traceability, transparency, and consumer protection in a globalized market.¹²⁴ These developments reflect the shift from a primarily legal-theological concern to a system involving regulatory oversight, certification bodies, and complex supply chains. According to John Fischer views that in a globalized industry, halal compliance now extends “not only in the modern and globalized industry for food but also in biotechnology... as well as personal care products,” requiring avoidance of any substances possibly contaminated with porcine residues or alcohol.¹²⁵ This broader scope signifies the growing influence of religion in shaping consumer standards across diverse sectors.

From the scriptural perspective, nearly the same Quranic verses were Gambian Islamic scholars Ulama holding the same view with MUI in Indonesia interpret the relevant Qur’anic Sūrat al-Baqarah [2]:168, 173 are cited to argue that Muslims must consume only *tayyib* (good) and halal food.¹²⁶ Islamic scholars routinely stress the Prophet Muhammad Hadith stated that the halal is clear, and

¹²² Yunes Ramadan Al-Teinaz and Hani Mansour M. Al-Mazeedi, ‘Halal Certification and International Halal Standards’, in *The Halal Food Handbook*, 1st ed., ed. Yunes Ramadan Al-Teinaz et al. (Wiley, 2020), p.228, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118823026.ch15>.

¹²³ Al-Teinaz and Al-Mazeedi, ‘Halal Certification and International Halal Standards’; Johan Fischer, ‘Religion, Science and Markets: Modern Halal Production, Trade and Consumption’, *EMBO Reports* 9, no. 9 (2008): 828–31, <https://doi.org/10.1038/embor.2008.156>.

¹²⁴ Mariam Abdul Latif, ‘Halal International Standards and Certification’, in *The Halal Food Handbook*, 1st ed., ed. Yunes Ramadan Al-Teinaz et al. (Wiley, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118823026.ch14>.

¹²⁵ Johan Fischer, ‘What Is a Halal Lab? Islamic Technoscience in Malaysia’, in *New Religiosities, Modern Capitalism, and Moral Complexities in Southeast Asia*, ed. Juliette Koning and Gwenaël Njoto-Feillard (Springer Singapore, 2017), p.199.

¹²⁶ Syafiq Hasyim, *Halal Its Historical Trajectory and Shariatization in Indonesia*, Reference collection (Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia, 2021), 1–48; Participant 4, ‘Consideration of Madhab (Islamic Jurisprudential Schools) in Halal Certification Standards in The Gambia’, 2025, Online Interview; Participant 3, ‘Consideration of Madhab (Islamic Jurisprudential Schools) in Halal Certification in The Gambia’, 2025.

the haram is clear; between the two are some doubtful matters, so those who fear error will avoid ambiguous cases.¹²⁷ This is a well-known tradition in the Muslim world; it is noteworthy that both Gambian and Indonesian authorities draw the same conclusions about these verses and hadiths.

The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB) has promulgated national standards for all imported products, including halal foods. For example, TGSB's policies set a validity of three years for halal certificates, requiring companies to renew their certification periodically.¹²⁸ This renewable-certification framework serves two purposes: maintaining ongoing compliance with halal requirements and generating revenue from renewal fees. At the same time, it ensures that even foreign halal certificates used in Gambian imports expire within three years and must be replaced with TGSB-approved endorsements.¹²⁹ In other words, TGSB maintains oversight over both national and international certifiers.

The Islamic principle behind these standards is clear. Islamic law explicitly forbids the consumption of carrion, blood, pork, and any food consecrated to anything other than God; such items are classified as *haram*.¹³⁰ Ritual slaughter must be performed with a sharp incision to the animal's throat in God's name, so that the blood drains out fully.¹³¹ Modern halal compliance requires that processors keep all foods free from any porcine derivatives or alcohol. This means avoiding ingredients like gelatin, glycerin, emulsifiers, enzymes, and flavors that may be tainted.¹³² When ambiguity arises about a product, qualified Islamic scholars and

¹²⁷ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, 'The Halal Industry from a Shari'ah Perspective', *ICR Journal* 1, no. 4 (2010): 595–612; Hasyim, *Halal*.

¹²⁸ TGSB, *Management System Certification Steps. TGSB-CB-RGD-MS-001-V1*, The Gambia Standard Bureau, 2022, [file:///C:/Users/hp/Downloads/THesis%20of%20Halal%20references/Thesis%20Updates/System-Certification-steps-Final%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/hp/Downloads/THesis%20of%20Halal%20references/Thesis%20Updates/System-Certification-steps-Final%20(1).pdf).

¹²⁹ TGSB, *Certification Processes Steps for Product Certification*, TGSB-CB-RGD-MS-001-v1, The Gambia Standards Bureau, 13 January 2022.

¹³⁰ TGSB, *Catalogue of The Gambia Standards Bureau*, Catalogue, The Gambia Standards Bureau, 2022, p.1-50; Participant 4, 'Consideration of Madhab (Islamic Jurisprudential Schools) in Halal Certification Standards in The Gambia', 2025.

¹³¹ Participant 2, 'Consideration of Madhab (Islamic Jurisprudential Schools) in Halal Certification Standards in The Gambia', 2025, Online Interview.

¹³² Participant 3, 'Consideration of Madhab (Islamic Jurisprudential Schools) in Halal Certification in The Gambia', 2025; Participant 4, 'Consideration of Madhab (Islamic Jurisprudential Schools) in Halal Certification Standards in The Gambia', 2025.

official bodies are called on to make determinations, as the locus of halal authority lies with recognized Islamic institutions.¹³³

Thus, the contemporary halal system in The Gambia can be seen as part of a globalized religious economy. Halal stakeholders in Gambia are acutely aware of what occurs in other moral economies, such as kosher markets or halal tourism, and aim to regulate halal similarly.¹³⁴ The objective is to ensure that Muslims view halal not merely as a label, but as a managed commodity with clear rules and oversight.¹³⁵ TGSB's standards represent what Fischer calls Islamic technoscience the integration of religious principles with modern scientific validation.¹³⁶ However, unlike Malaysia's high-tech laboratories, The Gambia's approach demonstrates how institutional innovation can achieve similar legitimacy goals through administrative rather than technological means.¹³⁷ This creates a new form of moral economy where trust is generated through bureaucratic compliance with international standards rather than through traditional scholarly interpretation, serving *maslahah* by enabling participation in global markets while maintaining Islamic credibility.

3.3. Islamization of Knowledge and Technoscience

The Islamization of Knowledge and Islamic technoscience in relation to modern halal standards and certification, are closely link frameworks designed to weave Islamic values into the fabric of modern scientific methods, technologies, and knowledge systems.¹³⁸ This blend has had a significant impact on the halal

¹³³ Participant 1, 'Awareness and Education on Halal Standards in The Gambia', 2025, Online Interview; Participant 2, 'Awareness and Education on Halal Standards in The Gambia', 2025, Online Interview.

¹³⁴ Yaya Foday, 'An Exploratory Study of Opportunities for Halal Tourism in The Gambia; the Perceptions of Stakeholders on the Destination'.

¹³⁵ Karijn Bonne and Wim Verbeke, 'Religious Values Informing Halal Meat Production and the Control and Delivery of Halal Credence Quality', *Agriculture and Human Values* 25, no. 1 (2007): 35–47, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-007-9076-y>.

¹³⁶ Fischer, 'Technoscience and Globalized Moral Economies'.

¹³⁷ Fischer, 'What Is a Halal Lab? Islamic Technoscience in Malaysia'.

¹³⁸ Md Mahfujur Rahman, 'Halal Industry 4.0 and Knowledge Management: Technological Integration and Sustainability', in *Innovative Ventures and Strategies in Islamic Business* (IGI Global Scientific Publishing, 2025); Fischer, 'What Is a Halal Lab? Islamic Technoscience in Malaysia'.

industry globally, which now increasingly depends on standardized scientific processes and traceability methods to meet religious requirements.

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, a prominent Malaysian philosopher, is central to the Islamization of Knowledge. He champions the idea of integrating knowledge within an Islamic metaphysical framework, asserting that all true knowledge comes from God and should not be limited to secular rationalism or just empirical science.¹³⁹ He firmly rejects the Western secular approach, highlighting the importance of revelation, intuition, and divine authority in the pursuit of knowledge.¹⁴⁰ In many societies Muslim and non-Muslim countries including Malaysia, the Islamization of knowledge has played a crucial role in the development of Islamic technoscience, particularly in the realm of halal certification.¹⁴¹ The concept of "Islamic technoscience" encompasses the Islamization of material technology, techniques, and specialized social expertise, creating a highly technical and specialized form of religious knowledge that interacts with state regulations and secular interests.¹⁴² Halal technoscience focuses on merging religious requirements like avoiding pork and alcohol with contemporary scientific practices (such as DNA detection and laboratory testing).¹⁴³

Islamic technoscience, as described by Johan Fischer, refers to the way material technologies, scientific methods, and specialized social knowledge are infused with Islamic principles. This results in a unique and intricate form of religious knowledge that actively engages with government regulations and secular

¹³⁹ Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and the Philosophy of Science*. (International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1989), p.3-31.

¹⁴⁰ Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1977), p.38.

¹⁴¹ Mazyar Lotfalian, *Technoscientific Identities: Muslims and the Culture of Curiosity* (Rice University, 1999); Fischer, 'What Is a Halal Lab? Islamic Technoscience in Malaysia'.

¹⁴² Fischer, 'What Is a Halal Lab? Islamic Technoscience in Malaysia', p.199.

¹⁴³ Nor Azrini Nadiha Azmi et al., 'Combining Science and Faith for Better Quality and Safety in Halalan Toyib Products', *Halal Studies and Society* 1, no. 3 (2024): 12–14; Fischer, 'Religion, Science and Markets'; Ryan Calder, 'Halalization: Religious Product Certification in Secular Markets', *Sociological Theory* 38, no. 4 (2020): 334–61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275120973248>; Bergeaud-Blackler, 'Islamizing Food: The Encounter of Market and Diasporic Dynamics'.

interests.¹⁴⁴ Countries like Malaysia and Singapore showcase this blend beautifully through their training programs, which professionalize halal knowledge. Institutions like the Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM) and Singapore's MUIS Halal Academy offer thorough training that merges Islamic law (fiqh) with technoscientific approaches.¹⁴⁵ Employees at halal-certified companies are required to complete training on Islamic dietary laws, advanced lab techniques, quality control, and auditing practices.¹⁴⁶ These training sessions ensure that staff are well-equipped to uphold halal standards by combining religious teachings with the latest scientific verification methods.¹⁴⁷

In The Gambia, the fusion of Islamization principles and technoscience manifests clearly in the role of the Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB). TGSB's mandate includes testing and certification, and officials stress that halal certification must be grounded in "true Islamic values and principles" while factoring in modern science, food safety, and global supply chains.¹⁴⁸ In effect, Gambian regulators are embedding religious requirements into technical protocols. For example, halal slaughter laws may require that animals be healthy, fed, and handled according to Sharia (akin to global best-practice guidelines¹⁴⁹, but enforcement will depend on veterinary inspectors and lab tests (for instance, to detect prohibited substances like blood or porcine DNA). According to one TGSB official, 'We inspect slaughterhouses from time to time, including Lumos (local vendors) to ensure

¹⁴⁴ Fischer, 'What Is a Halal Lab? Islamic Technoscience in Malaysia'; Fischer, *Islam, Standards, and Technoscience In Global Halal Zones*.

¹⁴⁵ Fischer, 'Technoscience and Globalized Moral Economies'; Fischer, *Islam, Standards, and Technoscience In Global Halal Zones*.

¹⁴⁶ Abdul Manan Dos Mohamed et al., 'Training Essentials for Capacity Building in the Halal Industry: The Importance of Halal Logistics Training', in *Halal Logistics and Supply Chain Management in Southeast Asia* (Routledge, 2020); Azura Amid, 'Halal Detection Technologies', in *Solving Halal Industry Issues Through Research in Halal*, ed. Azura Amid et al. (Springer, 2024).

¹⁴⁷ Fischer, *Islam, Standards, and Technoscience In Global Halal Zones*.; Dos Mohamed et al., 'Training Essentials for Capacity Building in the Halal Industry: The Importance of Halal Logistics Training'.

¹⁴⁸ MOTIE, 'Trade Minister Highlights Innovation and Sustainability at World Halal Standards Day 2025'.

¹⁴⁹ Kartika and Sanneh, 'An Overview of the Halal Industry in the Gambia with Islamic Perspective'.

Sharia compliance with the slaughtering process.¹⁵⁰ The basic guidelines of OIC/SMIIC standards make it clear that halal slaughtering should be performed by an adult Muslim who is mentally sound, knowledgeable about Islamic slaughter rules, and certified by a recognized authority. Only sharp, food-grade steel tools are allowed, and using bones, nails, or teeth is strictly off-limits.¹⁵¹ The slaughtering must occur in facilities that are exclusively for halal animals, adhering to international hygiene standards, and all cleaning agents and lubricants used must also be halal and food-grade.¹⁵² The guidelines firmly ban any form of stunning or methods that cause loss of consciousness before the actual slaughter. When the time comes to slaughter, the animal must be alive and healthy, which can be confirmed by a qualified veterinarian if needed.¹⁵³ The slaughtering process involves a quick, single cut to the throat, windpipe, and major blood vessels in the neck, without cutting the spinal cord.¹⁵⁴ The slaughterer is required to utter the name of Allah Bismillah (tasmiya) right before each slaughter, and the animal must be allowed to bleed out completely.¹⁵⁵ These requirements are in place to ensure both the religious and hygienic integrity of halal meat, following the OIC/SMIIC 1:2019 standard

3.4. Halal as a Techno-Scientific Commodity

Islamic techno-science is increasingly essential in contemporary Muslim societies as they navigate the intersection of traditional religious knowledge and

¹⁵⁰ Participant 2, 'Awareness and Education on Halal Standards in The Gambia', 2025; Participant 1, 'Awareness and Education on Halal Standards in The Gambia', 2025.

¹⁵¹ OIC/SMIIC, *General Requirements for Halal Food*, OIC/SMIIC 1:2019, sections 5.2.2–5.2.8., SMIIC, 2019; Ali Abdallah et al., 'The Multiplicity of Halal Standards: A Case Study of Application to Slaughterhouses', *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 8, no. 1 (2021): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-021-00084-6>.

¹⁵² Abdallah et al., 'The Multiplicity of Halal Standards: A Case Study of Application to Slaughterhouses'; OIC/SMIIC, *General Requirements for Halal Food*,; TGSB, *Catalogues of Gambia Standard Breau*, Halal guide Book (The Gambia Standard Breau, 2022), 1–48.

¹⁵³ OIC/SMIIC, *General Requirements for Halal Food*,.

¹⁵⁴ Magfirah Dahlan, 'Animals in Islam and Halal Ethics', in *The Halal Food Handbook*, 1st ed., ed. Yunes Ramadan Al-Teinaz et al. (Wiley, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118823026.ch3>; Abdallah et al., 'The Multiplicity of Halal Standards: A Case Study of Application to Slaughterhouses'.

¹⁵⁵ Latif, 'Halal International Standards and Certification'; Azam and Abdullah, 'Halal Standards Globally A Comparative Study of Unities and Diversities among the Most Popular Halal Standards Globally'; Latif, 'Halal International Standards and Certification'; OIC/SMIIC, *General Requirements for Halal Food*,.

modern technical validation systems.¹⁵⁶ The concepts of halal certification and techno-scientific regulation are central to understanding how communities construct moral economies that adapt to globalized markets while preserving religious authenticity. In this regard, moral economy theory, which holds that communities defend traditional rights through broad consensus, provides a helpful framework for analysis.¹⁵⁷ Halal dynamics lie at the heart of how Islamic traditions integrate with technoscientific help Islamic theologian to constitute what is halal in the globe. Scholars argue that halal certification is a form of ‘Islamic technoscience,’ where state regulation standardizes religious practice.¹⁵⁸ The ‘moral economy’ theory helps explain how Gambian stakeholders preserve collective values while adapting to the global halal market.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, we argues that this project reflects how religious communities construct economic systems that maintain spiritual integrity in international competition and it is “about defending traditional rights through community consensus” in viewing the theoretical lens of E.P Thompson.¹⁶⁰ Recent scholarship emphasizes that halal is not a static category but part of a dynamic moral economy requiring empirical investigation. While prior research has focused on Islamic banking or generic Islamization of knowledge, little has systematically examined halal production, trade, and regulation as a technoscientific field. Building on Fischer’s concept of Islamic techno-science, this chapter examines how adopting scientific protocols, quality standards, and international certification is transforming halal governance in The Gambia. The techno-scientific framework reveals the shifting locus of authority from traditional religious scholars to technocratic and regulatory experts and the tensions this process creates. The halal becomes a techno-scientific commodity; the property of halalness is produced, marketed, and consumed much like a technical product.¹⁶¹ The increasing emphasis on halal verification methods continuously broadens

¹⁵⁶ Fischer, ‘What Is a Halal Lab? Islamic Technoscience in Malaysia’. *New Religiosities, Modern Capitalism, and Moral Complexities in Southeast Asia* (2017): 199-221.

¹⁵⁷ Thompson, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century’.

¹⁵⁸ Fischer, ‘What Is a Halal Lab? Islamic Technoscience in Malaysia’, p.11; Calder, ‘Halalization: Religious Product Certification in Secular Markets’.

¹⁵⁹ Fischer, ‘What Is a Halal Lab? Islamic Technoscience in Malaysia’.

¹⁶⁰ Thompson, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century’, p.78.

¹⁶¹ Johan Fischer, ‘Malaysia and the Rise of Muslim Consumer Culture’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Global Islam and Consumer Culture* (Routledge, 2024).

requirements to encompass emerging products and processes.¹⁶² Goods import in The Gambia, from meats to cosmetics, gain value by bearing a halal certificate or logo.¹⁶³ These labels function as visible trust technologies, signalling that the product has passed through standardized screening, just as Fischer observed Malaysian supermarkets displaying JAKIM logos.¹⁶⁴ Today, a meat counter or hotel claiming halal status in The Gambia implicitly offers a technical guarantee: staff have been trained, records have been kept, and TGSB compliance has been secured. As one official emphasized, 'these halal standards remind us that halal is not just about what we eat but how that food is being prepared and served from start to finish.'¹⁶⁵ In other words, the entire supply chain from farm inputs to final service becomes part of the “halal commodity” ecosystem.¹⁶⁶

Economically, this reification of halal is fuelling market expansion. The Gambia seeks to capitalize on the global halal boom (a multi-trillion-dollar market).¹⁶⁷ Gambian entrepreneurs are now positioning halal products as exports to Muslim markets or as attractions for Muslim tourists.¹⁶⁸ For example, hotels in coastal resorts are developing Muslim-friendly services segregated prayer spaces, halal menus and anticipate formal “halal tourism” accreditation.¹⁶⁹ In the food sector, suppliers and restaurants are implementing Halal Assurance Systems: TGSB inspections ensure that raw materials come from certified sources, and that processing lines avoid cross-contamination (reflecting Fischer’s observation of separate storage for pork vs. halal products).¹⁷⁰ Even though The Gambia imports

¹⁶² Fischer, ‘What Is a Halal Lab? Islamic Technoscience in Malaysia’; Fischer, ‘Malaysia and the Rise of Muslim Consumer Culture’.

¹⁶³ Isatou Cham, *Assessment Report on Halal Imported Food in Four Supermarkets in the Kombos*, Assessment Report (The Gambia Standards Bureau, 2024), 1–7.

¹⁶⁴ Fischer, ‘Malaysia and the Rise of Muslim Consumer Culture’; Fischer, *Islam, Standards, and Technoscience In Global Halal Zones*.

¹⁶⁵ MOTIE, ‘Trade Minister Highlights Innovation and Sustainability at World Halal Standards Day 2025’.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Yaya Foday, ‘An Exploratory Study of Opportunities for Halal Tourism in The Gambia; the Perceptions of Stakeholders on the Destination’; MOTIE, ‘Trade Minister Highlights Innovation and Sustainability at World Halal Standards Day 2025’.

¹⁶⁸ Yaya Foday, ‘An Exploratory Study of Opportunities for Halal Tourism in The Gambia; the Perceptions of Stakeholders on the Destination’.

¹⁶⁹ Ngum, ‘Gambia to Explore Halal Trade, Commits to Ethical Practices’.

¹⁷⁰ Fischer, ‘Malaysia and the Rise of Muslim Consumer Culture’.

much of its meat, local distributors can brand these imports with Gambian halal certification to tap into domestic and regional demand.¹⁷¹

Thus, halal becomes a tangible asset attached to goods and services. This commodification reflects globalization's transformation of religious practices into market categories. Institutional theory explains how organizations adopt standardized practices to signal legitimacy to external audience's halal certification becomes ceremonial conformity that signals religious compliance to global markets.¹⁷² However, the moral economy framework shows that this commodification only succeeds when it aligns with community values about religious authenticity, requiring continuous negotiation between commercial and spiritual objectives. Halal consumers in The Gambia increasingly expect to *see* the certification, as Fischer noted in Malaysia, that "it is crucial to be visibly halal".¹⁷³ Supermarkets in greater Banjul now display halal logos on packaging; even small bakeries emphasize their halal credentials.¹⁷⁴ In short, halalness is commodified through technoscientific means, scans, labels, and audits, making The Gambia's market fit into a larger global halal zone where religious compliance is bought, sold, and standardized.¹⁷⁵ Beyond technology, halal certification carries a strong moral economy. Fischer and Calder hold that a halal moral economy refers to how certification practices embed ethical values and social trust into markets.¹⁷⁶ In the Gambia, regulators explicitly invoke Islamic ethics: officials state that OIC/SMIIC standards are "purity, safety, ethical sourcing, and doing what's right for people and the planet".¹⁷⁷ These standards' technoscience requirements in the country stipulate that for production to constitute halal, it must follow the OIC/SMIIC technical requirements, embodying a spiritual commitment to honesty and community welfare. This commitment to consumer protection became evident in The Gambia

¹⁷¹ Ngum, 'Gambia to Explore Halal Trade, Commits to Ethical Practices'.

¹⁷² Ab Talib et al., 'Emerging Halal Food Market: An Institutional Theory of Halal Certificate Implementation'.

¹⁷³ Fischer, 'Malaysia and the Rise of Muslim Consumer Culture', p.48.

¹⁷⁴ Cham, *Assessment Report on Halal Imported Food in Four Supermarkets in the Kombos*.

¹⁷⁵ Ngum, 'Trade Ministry Commits to Developing Halal Industry in Gambia'.

¹⁷⁶ Calder, 'Halalization: Religious Product Certification in Secular Markets'; Fischer, 'Malaysia and the Rise of Muslim Consumer Culture'.

¹⁷⁷ MOTIE, 'Trade Minister Highlights Innovation and Sustainability at World Halal Standards Day 2025'.

after our engagement with the halal authorities in the country. We argue that The Gambia's standard requirements for a moral economy manifest in both consumer and institutional protection.¹⁷⁸ However, institutional protection for halal product certification and technoscience validation remains abstract without practical enforcement mechanisms for producers and importers in The Gambia. Evidence to that In reviewing the TGSB catalogue, emphasis is placed on the halal guidelines to be followed in The Gambia, which assume that a halal label guarantees halal compliance; therefore, any breach of trust, such as adulteration with non-halal substances, is considered a serious moral violation.¹⁷⁹ One of the participant express that 'The halal industry in The Gambia is highly welcomed and upheld because the country has a Muslim majority.¹⁸⁰ Due to this communal setting, people are committed to their religious beliefs and consumption practices. However, despite having a strong halal commitment, the participant conceded with other authors arguments the absence of certification bodies undermines this trust.¹⁸¹ The halal department at The Gambia Standards Bureau does not possess the legal authority to enforce compliance related to laboratory product testing for halal verification and labelling for halal certification. Assessment reports indicate that TGSB's unannounced inspections and mandatory labelling rules establish a moral-legal framework: businesses are required to label food as halal and uphold proper hygiene standards.¹⁸² In so doing, halal regulation enforces fall in what is called moral standards hygienic handling, truthful labelling, and even animal welfare at slaughter through bureaucratic means.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ James G Carrier, 'Moral Economy: What's in a Name', *Anthropological Theory* 18, no. 1 (2018): 18–35, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499617735259>; Ozlem Sandikci, 'Religion and Everyday Consumption Ethics: A Moral Economy Approach', *Journal of Business Ethics* 168, no. 2 (2021): 277–93, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04422-2>.

¹⁷⁹ TGSB, *Catalogues of Gambia Standard Breau*.

¹⁸⁰ Participant 2, 'Halal Certification Infrastructure in The Gambia', 2025, Online Interview.

¹⁸¹ Kartika and Sanneh, 'An Overview of the Halal Industry in the Gambia with Islamic Perspective', p.27.

¹⁸² TGSB, *Catalogues of Gambia Standard Breau*; TGSB, *Management System Certification Steps. TGSB-CB-RGD-MS-001-V1*.

¹⁸³ Mukherjee, 'Global Halal Meat, Money, and Religion' *Religions* 5, no. 1 (2014): 22-75; Md Mahfujur Rahman et al., 'Navigating Moral Landscape: Islamic Ethical Choices and Sustainability in Halal Meat Production and Consumption', *Springer Nature Link* 5, no. 1 (31 August 2024): 225, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-024-00388-y>; Fischer, 'Technoscience and Globalized Moral Economies'.

This moral economy also has a corrective side. Gambian halal stakeholders recognize challenges like the halal authority in The Gambia is the lack of a reliable and comprehensive system for certifying, labelling, and monitoring halal products resulting in inconsistent standards, ambiguous product labelling, limited public awareness, and insufficient enforcement capacity, all of which undermine consumer trust and the effective regulation of the halal market.¹⁸⁴ Gambian authorities have begun to inspect the halal sector to actively counter these challenges, as halal is about shared values of cleanliness and safety. Meanwhile, competition among certifiers on the international market has its moral dimension. The Gambian state's embrace of SMIIC aims to unify standards so consumers do not fall victim to inconsistent rulings.¹⁸⁵ Halal certification standards vary between countries, meaning products approved in one nation may be rejected in another. This creates logistical challenges and inefficiencies, highlighting the need for internationally standardized halal certification criteria to ensure seamless cross-border trade.¹⁸⁶ By aligning with widely recognized standards, The Gambia is trying to build a moral economy of trust whereby Muslims can rely on Gambian certification similarly across different markets.¹⁸⁷ This shift exemplifies Johan Fischer's idea of *Islamic technoscience*, where halal is increasingly verified through procedural and scientific measures. In The Gambia, however, where scientific infrastructure is weak, the state engages in symbolic conformity. This reflects institutional isomorphism,¹⁸⁸ where The Gambia's TGSB mimics global models like OIC/SMIIC halal standards to gain OIC bilateral trade for economic development.

¹⁸⁴ Cham, *Assessment Report on Halal Imported Food in Four Supermarkets in the Kombos*, p.6.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.1-7.

¹⁸⁶ Irwan Afi et al., 'The Role of Certification Standards in Shaping Halal Supply Chain Practices: A Qualitative Literature Review', *Journal of Islamic Law and Legal Studies* 1, no. 2 (2024): 78–91.

¹⁸⁷ Kartika and Sanneh, 'An Overview of the Halal Industry in the Gambia with Islamic Perspective'; MOTIE, 'Trade Minister Highlights Innovation and Sustainability at World Halal Standards Day 2025'.

¹⁸⁸ Paul J. Dimaggio and Walter W. Powell, 'The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields', in *The New Economic Sociology*, ed. Frank Dobbin (Princeton University Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691229270-005>.

For example, by aligning with these standards, TGSB can attract investment and trade from OIC member countries, which represent a significant global market.¹⁸⁹

3.5. Certification Challenges and Global Influences

Despite these advances, The Gambia's halal tech-regime faces many challenges. A significant issue is capacity. This study and previous studies found no robust halal institutes or comprehensive regulatory enforcements for imported products in The Gambia.¹⁹⁰ Muslims in The Gambia currently rely on local butchers for halal meat, even though formal certification is lacking. Scaling up halal standards will require training inspectors' auditors and imams to know the ingredients if they are halal or not. This cannot be possible without establishing testing labs to detect chemical contaminants or non-halal enzymes, and formalizing halal committees to oversee tasks requiring expertise and funding. Recent Gambian press underscores the urgency of stakeholder education, noting that the "ongoing battle for halal standards and accreditation" has been hindered by low awareness.¹⁹¹

Another challenge is the harmonization of standards. As Gambia integrates into the global halal economy, it must navigate multiple certification regimes. Fischer's biotech work shows how companies simultaneously juggle Malay (JAKIM), Indonesian (MUI), Middle Eastern, and European halal bodies.¹⁹² Gambian businesses might similarly seek dual certification. The skills-for-Africa program explicitly prepares participants to understand JAKIM, MUI standards, and

¹⁸⁹ Abdoulie Nyockeh, 'Gambia Standards Bureau Exposes Stakeholders to Halal Standards', *ThePoint.Gm* (Banjul, The Gambia), 11 September 2015, <https://halalfocus.com/gambia-standards-bureau-exposes-stakeholders-to-halal-standards/>; Abdoul Fathi Sanogo, 'Implementation of OIC/SMIIC Halal Standards in Africa: Current Status and Challenges', paper presented at Conference: International Halal Congress (IHC), Ankara, Turkey, *Implementation of OIC/SMIIC Halal Standards in Africa: Current Status and Challenges*, 2024; Anom Sigit Suryawan et al., 'Negotiating Halal: The Role of Non-Religious Concerns in Shaping Halal Standards in Indonesia', *Journal of Rural Studies* 92 (May 2022): 482–91, <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JRURSTUD.2019.09.013>.

¹⁹⁰ Kartika and Sanneh, 'An Overview of the Halal Industry in the Gambia with Islamic Perspective'.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p.25-26; Participant 1, 'Challenges in Halal Standard Adoption in The Gambia', 2025, Online Interview.

¹⁹² Fischer, 'Technoscience and Globalized Moral Economies'.

SMIIC.¹⁹³ However, this plurality can confuse consumers and producers. TGSB has focused on SMIIC (the OIC's standard-setting body) to mitigate this, hoping for a unified framework. Still, global pressures such as Malaysia's insistence on JAKIM, or the Codex Alimentarius's emerging halal guidelines, are influential. Gambian regulators must update national rules to meet foreign requirements and trading partners' demands.

Finally, there is the practical enforcement hurdle. Fischer notes that in Malaysia, supermarkets separate pork and offer halal counters under JAKIM audits.¹⁹⁴ In The Gambia, where modern retail is less dominant, ensuring separation and preventing cross-contamination is nontrivial. TGSB requires that importers and processors maintain procedures compatible with halal, such as keeping proper documentation of suppliers and slaughter practices. Store managers in The Gambia must now be prepared to show valid halal certificates during inspections, much as Fischer found in Kuala Lumpur.¹⁹⁵ There will inevitably be informal or fraudulent actors until oversight is entrenched. In the Gambia, the Movement for Islamic Research and Da'wah, partnering to promote halal pharmaceuticals, suggests a broad consensus.¹⁹⁶ Over time, as Fischer argues, the more halal proliferates, the more bureaucratic-scientific modes become normalized, and the more markets revolve around certification.¹⁹⁷

To sum up this chapter, shown that The Gambia's halal certification regime is increasingly shaped by the integration of Islamic techno-science where traditional religious values are articulated through modern regulatory, scientific, and bureaucratic mechanisms. The process of standard-setting, inspection, and certification has shifted significant authority from classical religious scholars to technical experts and government bodies, echoing broader global trends. This

¹⁹³ PaulMG, 'Skills for Africa -Halal Food Safety and Quality Certification Training Course Gambia', Skillsforafrica.Org, 2025, <https://skillsforafrica.org/gm/course/halal-food-safety-and-quality-certification-training-course>.

¹⁹⁴ Fischer, 'Malaysia and the Rise of Muslim Consumer Culture'.

¹⁹⁵ Fischer, 'Technoscience and Globalized Moral Economies'; Fischer, 'Malaysia and the Rise of Muslim Consumer Culture'.

¹⁹⁶ Kartika and Sanneh, 'An Overview of the Halal Industry in the Gambia with Islamic Perspective'.

¹⁹⁷ Fischer, 'Malaysia and the Rise of Muslim Consumer Culture'.

transformation enables participation in the global halal economy, it also produces new challenges around capacity, enforcement, and the marginalisation of local religious voices. The Gambian experience shows the country current efforts to balance religious authenticity with international standards, forging a moral economy that both responds to and reshapes the global halal marketplace. The administrative approach to Islamic technoscience, as demonstrated above, reflects political constraints on state capacity rather than merely religious preferences. This sets the stage for examining how political pluralisation shapes halal certification development within resource-constrained institutional contexts.

CHAPTER IV

Political Pluralisation and Halal Certification Development in The Gambia

4.1. Introduction

Political pluralisation and halal certification development are increasingly important in contemporary Islamic societies, particularly in economic globalisation and religious governance. Political economy and halal standardisation are central to understanding the evolving landscape of halal certification in The Gambia. Political pluralisation is at the heart of our understanding of how religious practices intersect with state policy and economic development, especially as states navigate the demands of tradition and modernity, and the regulation of religion instituted in the nation state. Investigating the dynamics of halal certification is a continuing concern in many Muslim majority countries, and shariatisation is in discussion, regulating sharia in the public and private sphere, reflecting its significance as a central area of interest within halal governance, law, and economic development.

Halal certification has long been a question of great interest in various fields, from theology and jurisprudence to international trade and food safety for Muslim consumers. Institutional differentiation is central to the entire discipline of halal studies, where religious, economic, and political actors negotiate the boundaries of authority and legitimacy of the halalness of the products that need halal certification. The issue of halal certification has received considerable critical attention due to its implications for halal economics, religious authenticity, and global market integration.

The theory of political pluralisation provides a valuable account of how states like The Gambia reposition religious standards within national development strategies. This administrative isomorphism reflects what Thompson's moral economy theory predicts: communities adapt external pressures through consensus-building rather than resistance, with *maslahah* providing the Islamic justification for such adaptive strategies. The observed complexity demonstrates how institutional, moral economy, and Islamic legal frameworks interconnect rather than operate independently. The observed complexity of halal certification in The Gambia, shaped by global regulatory regimes, local religious traditions, and state agency intervention, has been the subject of many classic studies in Islamic law and

development. As The Gambia embraces international halal standards while navigating local religious norms, the political dimension of halal standardisation becomes instrumental in understanding the broader transformations underway in Muslim-majority societies. In this chapter, the theory of political pluralisation is used to illuminate the shifting balance of authority among state institutions, religious scholars (ulama), and international organizations in shaping the evolution of halal certification policy in The Gambia. This framework helps explain how power, legitimacy, and decision-making are negotiated and contested among multiple actors as the country integrates into global halal markets.

4.2. Politics Behind the Development of Halal Standards in The Gambia

The development of halal certification standards and halal authentication represents a socio-material process. In this process, science, technology, and ethno-religious politics in The Gambia reflect broader trends in politicising religious practices for economic and diplomatic purposes. In other words, the Gambian government recognised the potential of the global halal market. The government's active participation in halal standardisation is evident in its commitment to aligning national standards with international benchmarks. Minister of Trade Baboucarr Ousmaila Joof highlighted this commitment on World Halal Standards Day 2024. He emphasised the Ministry's dedication to promoting and developing the halal industry in The Gambia.¹⁹⁸ However, the implementation of these government commitments faces significant institutional challenges. Interview data reveals, "Government participation is limited, unlike in Indonesia or Malaysia where halal is national policy".¹⁹⁹ This reflects resource constraints and different institutional legacies rather than lack of commitment. Institutional theory suggests that organizations with limited resources adopt symbolic adoption of international standards they embrace the formal structures without full implementation capacity.²⁰⁰ The Gambian approach demonstrates political pluralisation where

¹⁹⁸ Ngum, 'Trade Ministry Committed to Support Stakeholders to Promote Halal Industry in Gambia', 2024.

¹⁹⁹ Participant 1, 'Political Pluralisation in Development of Halal Standards in The Gambia', 2025, Online Interview.

²⁰⁰ Christine Oliver, 'Strategic Responses to Institutional Processes', *The Academy of Management Review* 16, no. 1 (1991): 145, <https://doi.org/10.2307/258610>.

multiple actors share authority by necessity rather than design, with international organizations (SMIIC) providing technical expertise that domestic institutions cannot generate.²⁰¹ According to informant argue that "we are trying to engage the Ministry of Trade and push for cabinet-level support" and that "leadership support is critical for further progress".²⁰² This gap between political rhetoric and institutional capacity highlights the complex dynamics of halal certification development in The Gambia.

This institutional complexity reflects what scholars have termed 'institutional differentiation', the strategic separation of economic functions from core religious and social missions to minimise potential conflicts.²⁰³ In The Gambia's context, the government has the initiative to institutionalise halal in the country while simultaneously promoting halal business in a broader scope as an economic development strategy.²⁰⁴ However, what Robert Wuthnow called the effective porosity between economic and socio-religious spheres has created tensions similar to those observed in other Islamic organisations, where the boundaries between charitable religious purposes and profit-making activities have become increasingly blurred since the late 1990s.²⁰⁵

The development of halal certification in The Gambia exemplifies the complex tensions that emerge when religious principles confront modern economic structures. As Max Weber argued, the connection of religion with modern capitalism represents a fundamental struggle between ethical rationalisation and economic rationalisation processes.²⁰⁶ In the context of The Gambia, this tension manifests in the government's attempts to balance authentic Islamic commercial practices with the demands of global market integration. Rather than representing a uniform conflict between economic pressures and religious imperatives, the Gambian

²⁰¹ Participant 1, 'Political Pluralisation in Development of Halal Standards in The Gambia', 2025.

²⁰² Ibid., p.1.

²⁰³ Robert Wuthnow, 'Religion and Economic Life', in *The Handbook of Economic Sociology* (Princeton University Press Princeton, 1994), p.632.

²⁰⁴ Mariatou Ngum, 'Trade Ministry Committed to Support Stakeholders to Promote Halal Industry in Gambia', *The Standard Newspaper* (Banjul, The Gambia), 2024.

²⁰⁵ Wuthnow, 'Religion and Economic Life', p.632.

²⁰⁶ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (University of California press, 1978), p.584.

experience demonstrates what Robert Wuthnow describes as “highly complex negotiated interactions” between religious authenticity and commercial viability. These negotiations are particularly evident in the challenges of implementing international halal standards while maintaining local religious authority and ensuring economic competitiveness in global markets.²⁰⁷

The political dimension of halal standards emerges from the government’s worldwide promotion of Islamic commercial practices. The Gambia’s approach involves direct government promotion of halal standards as part of its broader economic development strategies. This politicisation serves multiple purposes: legitimising government aims for citizens to venture into halal business, positioning the TGSB as a reliable partner in the global Islamic economy, and creating institutional mechanisms for controlling religious commercial practices. The government’s approach to halal certification standards also reflects the broader phenomenon of “halal nationalism” observed in various Muslim-majority countries, where national governments assert their authority over religious commercial standards as a means of maintaining control over religious interpretation and practice.²⁰⁸ In The Gambia’s context, this has involved establishing government-led promotion of certification standards, and integration into the global halal economy is facilitated through strategic partnerships with international organisations.²⁰⁹

This integration process, however, requires careful navigation of the tension between international standards and local religious practices. Localising international halal standards presents particular challenges in The Gambia’s context. One of the informants from the certification section explained, “After SMIIC develops a standard, they train us, and we train our local technical committee members.” These trained members help us localise the standards for use in The Gambia.²¹⁰ However, this process ensures alignment between international

²⁰⁷ Wuthnow, ‘Religion and Economic Life’, p.632.

²⁰⁸ Johan Fischer, ‘Halal, Haram or What? Creating Muslim Space in London’, in *Muslim Societies in the Age of Mass Consumption: Politics, Culture and Identity between the Local and the Global* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), p.12; Richard R. Wilk, ‘Food and Nationalism: The Origins of “Delizéan Food”’, in *Food Nations* (Routledge, 2014), p.80.

²⁰⁹ Omar Wally, ‘Gambia: Policy Makers, Regulatory Agencies Brainstorm On “Halal” Foods’, *The Daily Observer* (Banjul, The Gambia), 2015.

²¹⁰ Participant 1, ‘Political Pluralisation in Development of Halal Standards in The Gambia’, 2025.

standardisation and local standard practices, given that they must "do things by Sharia while ensuring inclusivity".²¹¹ Inclusivity in the sense that the halal standards they localise will not be tied to only the Maliki jurisprudential opinions, but will follow the consensus in any standard they adopt.

Significant economic opportunities ultimately drive the government's strategic emphasis on halal certification. Trade Minister Baboucarr Ousmaila Joof, in an interview on Coffee Time at the West Coast Radio, emphasised this economic potential when he stated, "For Gambians, this represents another business avenue for those still exploring entrepreneurial options." Search for areas within the halal industry to explore because many sectors remain underdeveloped. Choose one area, develop it thoroughly, and establish your market niche in a "blue ocean" rather than entering oversaturated markets where you compete with established players. This approach avoids the typical Gambian tendency to replicate what others have done successfully. Instead, consider something slightly different from existing ventures to create market space in uncontested territory".²¹² Economic opportunities in the halal sector drive the substantial politicisation of halal certification. The global halal food market alone represents significant export opportunities for developing countries like The Gambia, particularly in processed foods, beverages, and agricultural products.²¹³ For The Gambia, by establishing credible halal certification, the government aims to access these markets while building domestic industries that can compete internationally under the halal brand.

4.3. International Islamic Organisations and Strategic Partnerships in The Gambia

One interesting finding is that The Gambia's approach to halal standardisation exemplifies how international collaboration, particularly through its long-standing membership in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), has shaped both domestic religious and commercial practices. It is stated that The Gambia's participation in OIC initiatives laid a solid foundation for the country's

²¹¹ Participant 2, 'Consideration of Madhab (Islamic Jurisprudential Schools) in Halal Certification Standards in The Gambia', 2025.

²¹² CTWPG. *Babucarr Joof Shares Saudi Returnee Stories, Spain Migration Scheme & More* (Banjul, The Gambia: WCR Gambia, 2025), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXdjCBPAehE>.

²¹³ Mohi-ud-Din Qadri Hussain, 'Halal Food Industry', in *The Global Halal Industry* (Researchgate, 2024), p.44–74, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003441540-4>.

subsequent adoption of comprehensive international halal standards, especially after the establishment of the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC) in 2011.²¹⁴

The most important result was that The Gambia made a decisive political choice to adopt SMIIC's detailed specifications for halal food production, processing, and certification as the basis for its national system. Most striking was the substantial difference in approaches among OIC member states, given the voluntary and consensus-based nature of SMIIC standards, yet The Gambia chose full alignment, demonstrating a clear commitment to international integration.²¹⁵

These dynamics reflect what institutional theory describes as coercive isomorphism where organizations conform to external models to gain legitimacy, resources, or prestige.²¹⁶ The Gambia's TGSB halal infrastructure, influenced by OIC/SMIIC frameworks, exemplifies such conformity. However, this top-down adaptation interacts with a deeply rooted local moral economy, where halal legitimacy traditionally stems from community trust and religious authority. This can be characterized that the standardization is not just a technical issue, but a negotiation between global norms and embedded religious structures.

Another finding that stands out from the results reported earlier is that this strategic alignment, while enhancing global trade and investment opportunities for The Gambia. Local stakeholders acknowledged the value of SMIIC, with one informant stating, currently, Gambia's TGSB relies more on SMIIC standards. Because The Gambia is part of the OIC, they encourage Muslim countries to work with SMIIC, an outstanding institution. However, the reliance on international standards created divisions among local scholars (Ulamas), given the country's adherence to the Maliki school of thought and the need to navigate differences

²¹⁴ OIC/SUM-15/2024/FC/, 'Final Communiqué', Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, 2024, p.1-38.

²¹⁵ Moh. Fathoni Hakim and Ridha Amaliyah, 'Competing Global and Local Halal Standards: Indonesia's Strategy in Increasing Halal Food Exports After Ratifying SMIIC', *Journal of Digital Marketing and Halal Industry* 6, no. 2 (2024): p.194, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jdmhi.2024.6.2.23610>.

²¹⁶ Dimaggio and Powell, 'The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields'.

between madhhabs carefully.²¹⁷ This illustrates what the *maslahah* framework provides a theoretical solution international standards can be justified as serving Islamic public interest, but only if they accommodate rather than override local jurisprudential diversity.²¹⁸ The finding and the theory illustrate that The Gambia's commitment to OIC halal standards is not merely technical but represents a significant political alignment.²¹⁹ Also is a way of positioning the country as an active participant in OIC-sponsored trade, investment, and commercial initiatives.²²⁰ It can be assumed as the government's strategic emphasis on halal certification reflects what Bakar describes as a necessary "civilisational renewal" (*al-tajdīd al-haḍārī*), integrating the strengths of tradition with the benefits of modernity, and embodying the synthesis that Bakar envisions for contemporary Islamic civilisation.²²¹

Several factors could explain this observation. Firstly, while The Gambia's strategic alignment with international halal standards has facilitated its integration into global markets, it has also generated tensions within the domestic religious landscape. This inconsistency may be due to the reliance on SMIIC standards, which, although beneficial for international trade, pose challenges for harmonising with the Maliki interpretation of Islamic law predominant among local scholars. These differences can partly be explained by the need to navigate the complexities of diverse madhhab school interpretations when implementing international standards at the national level.²²²

²¹⁷ TGSB, 'Catalogue of The Gambia Standards Bureau', Catalogue (Kutu, The Gambia: The Gambia Standards Bureau, 2022), p.35; SMIIC, 'General Requirements for Halal Food', OIC/SMIIC 1: 2019 (Ankara, Turkey: The Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries, 2019), p.iv-24, <https://toaz.info/doc-view-3>.

²¹⁸ Kamali, 'The Halal Industry from a Shari'ah Perspective'.

²¹⁹ Aboah et al., 'Going Local or Global? An Economic Feasibility Assessment of Establishing a Halal Slaughterhouse in the Gambia'; Yaya Foday, 'An Exploratory Study of Opportunities for Halal Tourism in The Gambia; the Perceptions of Stakeholders on the Destination'.

²²⁰ Yaya Foday, 'An Exploratory Study of Opportunities for Halal Tourism in The Gambia; the Perceptions of Stakeholders on the Destination'.

²²¹ Osman Bakar, *The Place and Role of Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah in the Ummah's 21st Century Civilisational Renewal*. *Islam and Civilisational Renewal*, 2, no. 1 (2011): p.289.

²²² Participant 4, 'Consideration of Madhhab (Islamic Jurisprudential Schools) in Halal Certification Standards in The Gambia', 2025.

Another possible explanation is that the voluntary and consensus-based nature of SMIIC standards allows for flexibility, leading to variations in adoption and implementation across OIC member countries. For The Gambia, the decision to align closely with SMIIC standards was also influenced by the desire to participate in OIC-sponsored trade and investment initiatives. The observed increase in The Gambia's participation in international halal trade fairs, expos, and business opportunities could be attributed to this strategic alignment, which has positioned the country as a credible partner within the global halal economy.²²³

Several possible explanations exist for halal certification's growing political and economic significance in The Gambia. The government's emphasis on halal certification may reflect what Bakar conceptualises as "civilisational renewal," integrating tradition with acceptable modernity to revitalise Islamic identity and economic dynamism.²²⁴ Another finding that stands out is that The Gambia has gained access to technical expertise and international networks, particularly through organisations like the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) and the World Halal Summit, which have played crucial roles in connecting local producers with international halal markets.²²⁵

This discrepancy could be attributed to ongoing implementation challenges at the domestic level. Despite government participation in international forums and training provided by SMIIC, significant gaps remain in institutional infrastructure and public awareness. As highlighted by stakeholder concerns about excluding Islamic scholars from some certification processes, the possible interference of coordination issues between technical and religious authorities cannot be ruled out. The relationship between The Gambia and SMIIC illustrates the complex dynamics of sovereignty and international cooperation in religious and commercial standardisation. Differences between domestic interpretations and international

²²³ Ibid., p.4.

²²⁴ Bakar, *The Place and Role of Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah in the Ummah's 21st Century Civilisational Renewal*. *Islam and Civilisational Renewal*, p.287.

²²⁵ Participant 1, 'Stakeholder Dynamics and Regulatory Interplay in The Gambia', 2025, Online Interview; ICDT, *Country Profile Republic of The Gambia The 57 OIC Member States Map* (Islamic Center for Development and Trade, 2022), https://icdt-cidc.org/countries/gambia/?Origine=map&dp_action=dfg_popup_fetch&popup_template=default&_wpnonce=ed7eef38df.

expectations may have influenced the pace and effectiveness of halal certification development in the country.

It seems possible that these results are due to the dual pressures of achieving international credibility while maintaining local religious legitimacy. The networking and learning opportunities provided by participation in events such as the World Halal Summit have also contributed to The Gambia's adoption of international best practices and the integration of its halal certification system into mutual recognition networks, which are crucial for market access.²²⁶ To sum up, these relationships may partly be explained by The Gambia's political commitment to Islamic economic integration and its pursuit of new opportunities in the global halal market, even as domestic implementation and institutional development continue to present challenges.

Turning to the domestic implementation of halal standards reveals complex challenges that reflect broader tensions between traditional practices and modern standardisation requirements. The development of halal certification in The Gambia faces several interconnected issues, highlighting the political complexity inherent in religious standardisation. Most participants agreed with the statement that the implementation of halal standards faces a significant awareness gap between producers and consumers in The Gambia. One interviewee argued that "the major challenges are lack of awareness and funding from the state," with "raising public awareness of halal standards and certification requires financial resources."²²⁷ One interviewee argued that raising awareness about halal cannot be successful without government investment in halal programs at the local level. There were some suggestions that current obstacles are compounded by common assumptions about halal compliance, as one participant commented, "Many people in the country assume that food and drinks, excluding alcohol and pork, are halal by default."²²⁸ In all cases, the informants reported that awareness is generally low during the production process, where products can be contaminated with najis (unlawful)

²²⁶ *Recovery Focused The Gambia National Development Plan 2023-2027*, Yiriwaa (Government of The Gambia, 2023), p.1-272; TGSB, *Catalogue of The Gambia Standards Bureau*, p.48.

²²⁷ Participant 1, 'Awareness and Education on Halal Standards in The Gambia', 2025.

²²⁸ Participant 1, 'Challenges in Halal Standard Adoption in The Gambia', 2025.

ingredients. That's where halal certification is needed for consumer protection and awareness, which is not always the case. Another informant echoed this view, emphasising that "people are not aware of what halal or haram is in imported products in The Gambia."²²⁹ There were some negative comments about the lack of public education, with suggestions that the TGSB should organise TV conversations and special programs on radio and television to sensitise the nation about the importance of halal food. Some felt that religiosity regarding imported products is lacking, while others considered that Muslim consumers are not sufficiently questioning or conscious about the ingredients used in the production of products. The informant expressed concern that many imported goods enter the country without certified halal logos, and Muslim consumers are not vigilant about what they consume.

These public education challenges and consumer awareness gaps highlight both the opportunities and limitations inherent in The Gambia's administrative approach to halal governance. The Gambia Standard Bureau approach to halal standardization reveals an alternative pathway to those documented in more technologically advanced contexts. In countries like Malaysia developed sophisticated laboratory infrastructure through JAKIM and Indonesia implemented comprehensive legal frameworks through BPJPH, The Gambia case can be characterised by demonstrates how administrative innovation can achieve similar legitimacy goals through different means.

JAKIM's method in Malaysia represents the high-technology approach incorporate substantial investment in laboratory facilities, DNA testing equipment, and scientific personnel to verify halal compliance. In modern halal governance, laboratory facilities and scientific methods are important in halal analysis and verification Najis non halal ingredients.²³⁰ Technologies such as DNA-based methods, chromatography, spectroscopy, and others are used to ensure halal

²²⁹ Participant 3, 'Public Awareness and Education on Halal Certification in The Gambia', 2025, Online Interview.

²³⁰ Azura Amid, 'Halal Detection Technologies', in *Solving Halal Industry Issues Through Research in Halal Sciences*, ed. Azura Amid et al. (Springer Nature Singapore, 2024), p.43, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3843-4_3.

integrity, particularly in detecting porcine DNA or alcohol content in food.²³¹ JAKIM collaborates with scientific agencies such as Malaysia's Department of Chemistry and other accredited laboratories to provide reliable halal testing and certification.²³² This technologically intensive system operates through state-led technocracy with mandatory compliance mechanisms, creating what Fischer terms "Islamic technoscience" where religious authority becomes embedded in scientific validation processes.²³³ The Malaysian approach demands significant financial resources but produces internationally recognized certification with strong enforcement capabilities.

In Indonesia, BPJPH (Halal Product Assurance Organizing Body) exemplifies a hybrid religious-state model for halal governance, blending technological advancements with robust legal enforcement. This system integrates religious principles of halal permissible under Islamic law with modern infrastructure and legal frameworks to ensure halal certification and product integrity. For example, in 2014, Indonesia enacted Law No. 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance, which mandated halal certification for products entering and circulating within the country.²³⁴ This law established a comprehensive regulatory framework, backed by state authority, while also maintaining a significant role for traditional Islamic scholars in the approval process.²³⁵ This approach requires substantial regulatory capacity and legal enforcement mechanisms, positioning Indonesia as a major player in global halal governance through institutional rather than purely technological means.

In contrast, The Gambia's TGSB approach operates through administrative innovation with minimal technological requirements. Rather than investing in

²³¹ Amid, 'Halal Detection Technologies', ed. Amid et al.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Fischer, 'What Is a Halal Lab? Islamic Technoscience in Malaysia', p.199-221; Fischer, 'Technoscience and Globalized Moral Economies', p.1054-1067.

²³⁴ Faried Kurnia Rahman et al., 'Developing a Legal Framework for the Halal Industry in Indonesia: Lessons for Brunei Darussalam', in *The Halal Industry in Asia: Perspectives from Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Japan, Indonesia and China*, ed. Rozaidah Idris et al. (Springer Nature, 2025), p.353-369, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-0393-0_18; Hasyim, *The Halal Project in Indonesia : Shariatization, Minority Rights and Commodification*, p.1-21.

²³⁵ Rahman et al., 'Developing a Legal Framework for the Halal Industry in Indonesia: Lessons for Brunei Darussalam'.

expensive laboratory infrastructure, TGSB adopts international standards through bureaucratic compliance mechanisms and voluntary guidelines. This administrative-religious hybrid maintains legitimacy through alignment with OIC/SMIIC standards while accommodating local Islamic scholars within the standardization process.²³⁶ The Gambian method demonstrates how institutional creativity can overcome resource constraints, though it risks legitimacy gaps without proper implementation capacity.

This comparison suggests that successful halal governance may follow multiple institutional pathways rather than a single modernization trajectory. The case of TGSB challenges assumptions that technological sophistication is a prerequisite for global halal market participation, revealing how administrative isomorphism can substitute for technological capacity. However, each approach faces distinct challenges: Malaysia's high-tech model requires substantial ongoing investment and technical expertise; Indonesia's legal framework demands comprehensive enforcement infrastructure and political commitment; minority religious group fear of being marginalized; In The Gambia, the administrative method risks credibility deficits if voluntary compliance mechanisms prove insufficient for market demands or if products lack sharia compliance during the production process.

Understanding these phenomena and their trade-offs in modern halal governance provides crucial insights for other countries designing halal governance systems within their specific constraints and capabilities. The diversity of successful approaches suggests that effective halal standardization depends less on adopting a particular technological model than on developing institutional arrangements that balance religious authenticity, regulatory capacity, and market requirements within available resources and political contexts.

4.4. Jurisprudential Considerations and Religious Authority in The Gambia

The International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) recognizes eight distinct schools of thought (madhhabs)

²³⁶ Participant 2, 'Halal Certification Infrastructure in The Gambia', 2025, p.1; TGSB, *Catalogue of The Gambia Standards Bureau*, p.1-48.

that serve as reference points for Muslims worldwide. These include the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali, Ithna Ashari, Zaidi, Ibadi, and Zahiri madhhabs. The Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC) incorporates all eight of these schools into its halal standards.²³⁷ The Gambia Standard Bureau (TGSB), adopting SMIIC standards with reservation, strictly to only Maliki jurisprudence, adopted the diverse madhab (school of thought) embedded in the SMIIC OIC Standards. According to one of the participants, "The standards adopted by the TGSB are developed by the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC), an institution under the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) that brings together Islamic scholars (ulama) from various schools of thought (madhabs)."²³⁸ When asked whether the Maliki school is strictly followed in adopting SMIIC standards for localisation, one of the participants argues that to follow only Maliki, it will be difficult, for example, in the Maliki school, "Dogs, hyenas, lions, and crocodiles are considered makruh in Maliki fiqh".²³⁹ A certification officer further explained that the TGSB takes a middle path to balance inclusivity for other Islamic schools of thought, noting, "If we lean only toward Maliki, other parties might feel offended or excluded."²⁴⁰ Taken together, these results suggest that while TGSB strictly adheres to the Maliki school, it demonstrates flexibility in adopting other Islamic jurisprudential views that enable The Gambia to maintain religious authenticity while achieving economic objectives and gaining recognition from international halal hubs. The success of this approach depends not only on market factors such as effective promotion and high-quality production, but also on religious support for localizing the standards, including the issuance of supportive halal fatwas.

A recurrent theme in the interviews was the perception among participants that the impetus for halal certification and standardisation in The Gambia is rooted in broader processes of globalisation and Islamic identity formation. One of the

²³⁷ Azam and Abdullah, 'Halal Standards Globally A Comparative Study of Unities and Diversities among the Most Popular Halal Standards Globally'. *Halalsphere* 1, no. 1 (2021): 11-31

²³⁸ Participant 3, 'Consideration of Madhab (Islamic Jurisprudential Schools) in Halal Certification in The Gambia', 2025.

²³⁹ Ibid., p.3.

²⁴⁰ Participant 2, 'Consideration of Madhab (Islamic Jurisprudential Schools) in Halal Certification in The Gambia', 2025, Online Interview.

participants argued that, “because of globalisation and increased interconnectedness among people, halal certification has become even more necessary today to ensure that what Muslims eat, consume, and wear is truly sharia-compliant.”²⁴¹ Interestingly, another informant echoed this view, arguing that awareness of Sharia compliance has strongly influenced Muslims in diaspora experiences who often face limited access to halal products. According to one participant, “Asking for halal certification has become an important issue among people in The Gambia, especially since many of our consumed products are imported from Muslim-minority countries. People now need to check whether a product is halal certified or not. Additionally, many young Gambians are going abroad to study in places like Southeast Asia and the Middle East, and in returning home, most of them come with a new awareness and consciousness of Muslim lifestyle, which has increased awareness of halal certification among the people in The Gambia.”²⁴² The results reported here show that the modern awareness of halal regulation and standards among Gambians is tied to globalisation and Muslims in diaspora. Ordinary Gambians historically do not ask about the religiosity of products consumed other than alcohol and pork. The awareness is limited to that products can be contaminated with porcine gelatine derived from pork and used to produce various products, including food and drinks. It is argued that the halal lifestyle has shifted from a private matter to a public and institutionalised practice over the past two decades, marked by halal legislation and growing public awareness. Muslim consumers now increasingly prioritise halal status in their purchasing decisions.²⁴³ It is worth knowing that the expanding halal market often assumes that Muslim demand for halal products is natural and will grow with the population. Still, such desires are culturally and historically constructed. Modern halal certification, a recent development aided by scientific methods, differs significantly from past practices and reflects new forms of halal awareness shaped by specific historical and local contexts. Therefore, the growth of the halal sector should be understood as a cultural and historical process, not merely as a natural outcome of religious

²⁴¹ Participant 4, ‘Globalization and Islamic Identity Preservation’, 2025, Online Interview.

²⁴² Ibid., p.4.

²⁴³ Syafiq Hasyim, ‘Halal Issues, Ijtihād, and Fatwa-Making in Indonesia and Malaysia’, *Rethinking Halal: Genealogy, Current Trends, and New Interpretations* 37 (2021): 80–107.

belief.²⁴⁴ Given all mentioned, one may conclude that the Gambian experience represents a broader transformation in how Muslim societies navigate the intersection of religious identity, economic development, and global integration. The development of halal certification standards serves as a technical regulatory process and a mechanism through which Islamic principles are operationalised within modern capitalist frameworks, creating new forms of religious-economic practice that respond to globalisation while asserting Islamic identity.

This globalization-driven transformation of halal consciousness represents a fundamental shift in religious practice that warrants deeper examination. The participant's observation reveals three interconnected processes: (1) deterritorialization of religious authority Ulama known as Islamic scholars no longer serve as the sole fully incorporated of halal authenticity; (2) technologization of religious compliance halal verification increasingly relies on scientific rather than scholarly validation; and (3) commodification of religious identity halal becomes a marketable attribute to economic dimension with religious prerogative for sharia compliance.

This transformation aligns with Roland Robertson's concept of "glocalization," where global processes become embedded in local contexts while simultaneously transforming them.²⁴⁵ In The Gambia's case, young returnees from Southeast Asia and the Middle East function as "religious knowledge brokers," introducing new halal consciousness that challenges existing moral economy structures.²⁴⁶ This creates awareness of the Islamization of knowledge and highlights the need to balance normative Islamic halal practices with modern global informed halal standards.

The implications extend beyond certification to questions of religious authenticity and cultural preservation. When one participant noted that "people now

²⁴⁴ En-Chieh Chao, 'Science, Politics, and Islam: The Other Origin Story of Halal Authentication in Indonesia', in *Rethinking Halal : Genealogy, Current Trends, and New Interpretations*, ed. Ayang Utriza Yakin and Louis-Léon. Christians (Brill, 2021).

²⁴⁵ Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. (Sage Publications, 1992), p.1-224.

²⁴⁶ Participant 4, 'Globalization and Islamic Identity Preservation', 2025.

need to check whether a product is halal certified or not,"²⁴⁷ this reflects a shift from trust-based to verification-based religious practice a fundamental transformation in the moral economy of Gambian Islam.

4.5. The Commercial Implications and Development of Halal Standards

The economic implications of adopting modern, standardized halal standards in The Gambia's TGSB is manifold. The potential for halal standards to open doors for export and generate revenue through service fees is significant, especially in a predominantly Muslim country such as The Gambia.²⁴⁸ It is argued that halal certification has substantial economic implications that extend beyond religious compliance to encompass broader development strategies.²⁴⁹ Evidence suggests that halal certification and standardisation are essential to strengthen consumer protection and ensure that goods produced are Sharia-compliant, safe, and hygienic.²⁵⁰

However, economic opportunities extend beyond mere trade and include the prospect of improving global trade acceptance and fostering halal tourism. For example, The Gambia was the host country of the OIC Summit in 2024.²⁵¹ The state agency responsible for national standards, the Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB), took the initiative to sensitize hotels and restaurants about halal tourism standards. One of the participants argued that halal certification "has a positive impact," attributing this to hotels where "halal compliance improves service quality and attracts halal-conscious tourists."²⁵² Another participant echoed this view, noting that "halal standardisation could open doors for exports if we develop certification

²⁴⁷ Participant 1, 'Awareness and Education on Halal Standards in The Gambia', 2025; Participant 4, 'Globalization and Islamic Identity Preservation', 2025.

²⁴⁸ Aboah et al., 'Going Local or Global? An Economic Feasibility Assessment of Establishing a Halal Slaughterhouse in the Gambia'; Yaya Foday, 'An Exploratory Study of Opportunities for Halal Tourism in The Gambia; the Perceptions of Stakeholders on the Destination'.

²⁴⁹ Rahman et al., 'Navigating Moral Landscape'; Suud Sarim Karimullah, 'Rethinking Halal: Exploring the Complexity of Halal Certification and Its Socio-Economic Implications', *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Hukum Dan Ekonomi Islam* 3, no. 2 (2023): 102–21.

²⁵⁰ Nor Surilawana Sulaiman and R. Abdullah, 'An Overview of Brunei's Halal Certification Development', in *Reinforcement of the Halal Industry for Global Integration Revival* (Routledge, 2022), p.78.

²⁵¹ Greg P. Griffin, 'Development and Capital at the Banjul International Airport in The Gambia', in *Transport Truths* (Bristol University Press, 2025).

²⁵² Participant 1, 'Economic Opportunities through Halal Certification in The Gambia', 2025, Online Interview.

infrastructure."²⁵³ Another participant expressed that economic benefits require investment: "If you want quality, you must pay the price. Some price must be paid for Sharia-compliant food. We must pay this price to ensure food meets our religious requirements."²⁵⁴ This economic reality suggests the need for a balanced approach that considers cost implications while striving for economic opportunities in the halal sector.

A standard view among heads of halal departments and certification officials was that the relationship between certification bodies and regulatory authorities demonstrates the interconnected nature of halal standardisation and broader food safety governance. Certification officials explained that "the Food Safety Authority makes our standards mandatory when they mention them in their technical regulations," and "our relationship is interconnected; they use our standards and turn them into technical regulations, making them mandatory for business owners dealing with particular products."²⁵⁵ Together, these results provide important insights from stakeholder interviews, revealing that certification in The Gambia does not necessarily mean that products have undergone halal laboratory testing. Instead, certification bodies work in consultation with standards officers. When asked how halal certification is an issue for clients' products that need to be certified halal? Two participants were unanimous in that when standards are developed or adopted, "we turn them into certification schemes for easy usage by applicants or clients."²⁵⁶

In summary, this chapter has highlighted how political pluralisation and the drive for economic development have shaped the evolution of halal certification in The Gambia. The state's adoption of international standards particularly through strategic alignment with OIC-SMIIC frameworks reflects a conscious effort to position the country within the global halal economy. However, these moves have generated both opportunities and tensions: while facilitating access to global

²⁵³ Ibid., p.1.

²⁵⁴ Participant 4, 'Economic Impact and Halal Tourism in The Gambia', 2025, Online Interview.

²⁵⁵ Participant 1, 'Stakeholder Dynamics and Regulatory Interplay in The Gambia', 2025.

²⁵⁶ Participant 1, 'Challenges in Halal Standard Adoption in The Gambia', 2025; Participant 2, 'Halal Certification Infrastructure in The Gambia', 2025.

markets and technical expertise, they also provoke debates about local religious legitimacy, jurisprudential diversity, and stakeholder inclusion. The ongoing negotiation between state institutions, religious authorities, and international partners underscores the complexity of embedding global halal norms in a national context marked by limited capacity and diverse religious traditions. The findings also speak to described in moral economy theory, as stakeholders in The Gambia must communal Islamic ethical expectations with the commodification and bureaucratization of halal standardisation determined by international halal industry demands.

CHAPTER V

5.1. Conclusion

This thesis has examined how The Gambia navigates the complex intersection between traditional Islamic practices and modern halal certification standards frameworks in its pursuit of global market integration. Through qualitative interviews with The Gambia Standard Bureau (TGSB) and analysis of institutional processes, this research has addressed critical gaps in understanding halal governance in resource constrained in The Gambia. The findings reveal a theoretically significant case of institutional adaptation that challenges existing assumptions about religious authority, modernization, and globalization in contemporary Muslim society.

The research addressed two primary questions: how The Gambia navigates between traditional and modern halal practices, and what historical and sociocultural factors have shaped this navigation process. The findings demonstrate that The Gambia's approach represents a distinctive form of "administrative isomorphism" where bureaucratic compliance with international standards substitutes for technological capacity in achieving global legitimacy. This process enables the participation in global halal markets, has generated unexpected consequences for religious authority and local institutional development.

Historical analysis revealed that halal practices in The Gambia have deep roots extending back to the 11th century the arrival Islam in Th Gambia through trans-Saharan trade routes. As one participant noted, "halal is not a new thing in Gambian society," reflecting centuries of embedded Islamic dietary practices governed through traditional moral economy mechanisms. The colonial period's indirect rule system allowed Islamic practices to persist largely unregulated, creating what E.P. Thompson's moral economy theory describes as community-based governance through "trust, tradition, and communal ethics." This historical legacy established a decentralized model where local Islamic scholars (Ulama) and community leaders-maintained authority over halal authority and interpretation through informal networks rather than formal halal standards and certification systems. Similarly, Sulayman Nyang Njie contested that:

“The pattern that developed during the colonial period was that Muslim leaders and their families tried to live in isolation from the Nasaranis. Where possible, they would maintain their existence within their cultural niches and work within the constraints and opportunities that colonial rule provided.”²⁵⁷

The post-independence period demonstrated institutional path dependence, where established arrangements persisted despite changing political contexts. From Jawara's pluralistic secularism through Jammeh's symbolic Islamic Republic declaration to Barrow's return to secular governance, halal regulation remained consistently lacking formal state regulation in the first and second republic in The Gambia. This persistence reflects what institutional theory identifies as cognitive frameworks resistant to change, where "once established, institutional arrangements tend to persist because they create vested interests."²⁵⁸ The establishment of the Gambia Supreme Islamic Council (GSIC) in 1992 represented an attempt to coordinate Islamic affairs while maintaining this decentralized approach.

The introduction of formal halal standards through The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB) represents a fundamental shift from community-based to technocratic governance. However, this transformation has proceeded through administrative rather than technological means, creating what this research terms "administrative marginalization" of traditional religious authority. Unlike Malaysia and Indonesia high-tech laboratories incorporated Ulama for comprehensive halal standards certification infrastructure, The Gambia adopted international standards through bureaucratic compliance with limited implementation capacity. Interview data reveals the tensions this creates, as one senior Islamic scholar observed: "being trained by SMIIC is not sufficient to understand Islamic theology on dietary rulings; it is wrong for TGSB to proceed without Islamic scholars." This criticism illustrates that the TGSB sharia committee is dissatisfied with their limited role in exercising religious authority over halal standards, particularly regarding slaughterhouse sensitization in abattoirs and supermarkets in the urban area in The Gambia.

²⁵⁷ Nyang, 'Islamic Revivalism in West Africa: Historical Perspectives and Recent Developments', p.243.

²⁵⁸ Pierson, 'Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics', p.255-259.

Despite this criticism, participants acknowledged the necessity of international alignment for economic and religious reasons. One certification officer explained, "if we lean only toward Maliki jurisprudence, other parties might feel offended or excluded," demonstrating pragmatic accommodation of jurisprudential diversity within SMIIC standards. This approach reflects the "principle of Maslahah" came in, The Gambia Standards Bureau shows its commitment to OIC/SMIIC standards and maintaining pluralism among sharia committee members trained in different schools of thought during the localise halal standards process. The TGSB sharia committee consensually accommodates multiple madhabs within international standards while preserving Gambian Islamic identity. This demonstrates successful navigation of religious globalization challenges through hybrid institutional forms that combine global legitimacy with local authenticity.

This research makes significant theoretical contributions that advance understanding of halal governance in The Gambia under globalization pressures. First, it extends Johan Fischer's Islamic technoscience concept to resource-constrained contexts, revealing how administrative innovation can achieve similar legitimacy goals as technological advancement. The Gambian case demonstrates that "institutional innovation can achieve similar legitimacy goals through administrative rather than technological means." TGSB's halal guideline book allows certification bodies and companies to voluntarily follow OIC/SMIIC standards²⁵⁹, since the Bureau lacks constitutional regulatory authority to mandate halal standards and certification for product imports. This voluntary approach reflects The Gambia's non-restrictive open market policy regarding halal certification requirements. This finding contributes to understanding how emerging states like The Gambia participate in global halal governance networks despite resource limitations.

Second, the research reveals a novel form of religious authority marginalization through technocratic processes involving bureaucratic adoption of international standards, rather than the technological incorporation seen in Malaysia

²⁵⁹ TGSB, *Catalogues of Gambia Standard Breau*, p.1-48.

and Indonesia.²⁶⁰ The Gambia demonstrates how authority transfer can operate through procedural rather than technological means. This extends technoscience literature by identifying previously unexplored mechanisms of institutional change that operate through administrative rather than technological marginalization, offering new insights into how globalized halal governance systems marginalize Ulama authority in Muslim-majority societies that have established halal certification bodies.

The study contributes significantly to moral economy theory by demonstrating its applicability beyond Western contexts and revealing how moral economies can "transform rather than simply resist external forces." The Gambian case shows how communities create hybrid halal governance systems that maintain sharia compliance while pursuing economic integration. This extends Edward Thompson concept of "the moral economy" to contemporary Gambian society as it navigates globalization pressures, demonstrating that moral economies can facilitate adaptation rather than merely preserve traditional arrangements.²⁶¹ The persistent role of local Ulama consensus and religious consultation in legitimizing institutional changes supports moral economy theory's emphasis on community legitimacy for sustainable institutional transformation.

The research advances understanding of *maslahah* known for Islamic public interest as a sharia principle for institutional innovation. According to one participant explained:

"Because of globalization and increased interconnectedness among people, halal certification has become even more necessary today to ensure that what Muslims eat, consume, and wear is truly sharia compliant."²⁶²

The participant expresses the current need for "Shariatization" of institutional halal certification in The Gambia.²⁶³ *Maslahah* theory is applied here because the argument advanced is that certification serves the public interest. In this

²⁶⁰ Fischer, 'Technoscience and Globalized Moral Economies', p.1054-1067; Fischer, *Islam, Standards, and Technoscience In Global Halal Zones.*, p.224.

²⁶¹ Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', p.76.

²⁶² Participant 4, 'Globalization and Islamic Identity Preservation', 2025.

²⁶³ Hasyim, *Halal*, p.1.

regard, Kawsu Sanneh and Yaya Drammeh indicate the extent of public demand for halal certification bodies in The Gambia.²⁶⁴

The political pluralisation for economy development analysis revealed how halal standardisation serves multiple functions beyond religious compliance, with government officials emphasizing economic opportunities. Trade Minister Joof described this as "another business avenue for those still exploring entrepreneurial options," reflecting state promotion of halal standards as part of broader economic development strategies.²⁶⁵ However, implementation faces significant challenges, as participants noted: "the major challenges are lack of awareness and funding from the state" and "government participation is limited, unlike in Indonesia or Malaysia where halal is national policy."²⁶⁶ These findings demonstrate the gap between political rhetoric and institutional capacity, illustrating what institutional theory terms "symbolic adoption" where organizations embrace formal structures without full implementation capacity.²⁶⁷

Three TGSB participants revealed that consumer awareness represents a critical challenge for halal standardization success, identifying a significant issue between traditional halal consciousness and modern halal standards requirements based on their experience and interaction with the public. They stress that "many people in The Gambia assume halal only applies to food and drinks, and that everything except alcohol and pork is halal by default halal."²⁶⁸ Additionally, participants observed that "people are not aware of what is halal or haram among

²⁶⁴ Kartika and Sanneh, 'An Overview of the Halal Industry in the Gambia with Islamic Perspective'; Yaya Foday, 'An Exploratory Study of Opportunities for Halal Tourism in The Gambia; the Perceptions of Stakeholders on the Destination'.

²⁶⁵ CTWPG., *Babucarr Joof Shares Saudi Returnee Stories, Spain Migration Scheme & More*; Ngum, 'Trade Ministry Committed to Support Stakeholders to Promote Halal Industry in Gambia', 2024.

²⁶⁶ Participant 3, 'Public Awareness and Education on Halal Certification in The Gambia', 2025; Participant 2, 'Awareness and Education on Halal Standards in The Gambia', 2025; Participant 1, 'Awareness and Education on Halal Standards in The Gambia', 2025.

²⁶⁷ Raymond LM Lee, 'The Globalization of Religious Markets: International Innovations, Malaysian Consumption', *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, JSTOR, 1993, 35–61; Sae Eun Lee et al., 'The Influence of Technological and Symbolic Innovation on New Product Adoption in a Social Context', *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal* 42, no. 2 (2013): p.138, <https://doi.org/10.1111/fcsr.12048>.

²⁶⁸ Participant 3, 'Public Awareness and Education on Halal Certification in The Gambia', 2025; Participant 2, 'Awareness and Education on Halal Standards in The Gambia', 2025; Participant 1, 'Awareness and Education on Halal Standards in The Gambia', 2025.

imported products.²⁶⁹ Another participant emphasized that "many imported goods enter the country without certified halal logos, and Muslim consumers are not vigilant about what they consume."²⁷⁰ These findings demonstrate how globalization has created new forms of halal awareness that differ significantly from historical practices. The Gambia requires systematic consumer education that can builds on existing religious knowledge while introducing contemporary certification standards.

5.2. Limitation

The methodology effectively captured nuanced institutional dynamics within The Gambia Standards Bureau. This validates qualitative case study approaches for understanding current halal governance transformations. The strategically limited sample of four participants appropriately represented the institutional perspectives of TGSB authorities handling the halal standard localization process. Data saturation was achieved through consistent thematic emergence across interviews. The document analysis used provide an essential triangulation beyond interview data, strengthening the validity of findings. However, the focus on official stakeholders may have missed perspectives from consumers, private sector actors, and civil society organizations, suggesting future research should incorporate broader stakeholder perspectives for more comprehensive understanding of halal governance impacts.

5.3. Recommendations

This thesis yields a few policy recommendations: inclusive halal governance mechanisms should fully incorporate traditional Islamic scholars into standardization and certification processes, including consumer and business sensitization regarding Sharia compliance. The marginalization between technocratic and religious authorities demonstrates that sustainable halal development requires collaborative rather than substitutive approaches. Second, effective local institutional capacity building demands systematic investment beyond political commitment. The researcher recommends that The Gambia's

²⁶⁹ Participant 3, 'Public Awareness and Education on Halal Certification in The Gambia', 2025.

²⁷⁰ Participant 2, 'Halal Certification Infrastructure in The Gambia', 2025.

Ministry of Trade and TGSB focus on developing domestic expertise, training programs, and infrastructure to bridge the gap between government rhetoric and implementation capacity. This approach should prioritize domestic capacity over international technical assistance, while establishing legal frameworks that grant TGSB monopolistic authority over halal regulation, similar to Indonesia's BPJPH and Malaysia's JAKIM. Third, consumer education programs must address awareness gaps between traditional halal consciousness and modern certification requirements through culturally appropriate approaches that build on existing Islamic knowledge while introducing contemporary standards.

The broader theoretical significance of this research extends beyond halal governance to understanding how Muslim-majority societies navigate religious identity, economic development, and global integration in the contemporary period. The Gambian experience demonstrates that successful adaptation requires systematic institutional development, regulatory mechanisms, and careful balance between commercial interests and religious authenticity rather than merely demographic advantages or religious foundations. The concept of "administrative isomorphism" offers insights applicable to other domains where resource-constrained institutions must achieve international legitimacy, revealing how bureaucratic compliance can substitute for technological capacity while maintaining authenticity.²⁷¹

The productive interaction between traditional and modern halal authority structures challenges common assumptions that modernization requires displacing traditional institutions. The Gambian case demonstrates that successful institutional transformation emerges from negotiated coexistence rather than replacement. For example, the selected Ulama serving as the Sharia committee are willing to participate in the localization process of halal standards in TGSB. This finding contributes to a broader understanding of institutional change through accommodation, offering valuable lessons for development policy and institutional design in contexts where traditional and modern authorities must coexist.

²⁷¹ Dimaggio and Powell, 'The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields', p.111.

In summary, this research reveals that The Gambia Standards Bureau's experience offers valuable insights for other Muslim communities seeking to integrate into global halal value chains while preserving cultural and Islamic integrity. The findings suggest sustainable halal standards development emerges from community consensus and religious consultation rather than top-down state imposition. This supports moral economy theory, which emphasizes that sustainable institutional change requires community legitimacy, meaning economic and institutional arrangements must align with shared ethical values and traditional expectations.²⁷²

The *maslahah* principle's role in legitimizing adaptive strategies demonstrates how Islamic legal maxims can facilitate responses to globalization while maintaining religious authenticity and serving public interest.²⁷³ This represents a significant contribution to understanding contemporary halal governance and its potential for addressing modern challenges in distinguishing halal from haram in technologically advanced production of goods and services, while preserving spiritual integrity. The model demonstrates a replicable approach for harmonizing divine mandates with pragmatic globalization needs, offering hope for Muslim societies navigating tensions between tradition and modernity in an interconnected world.

²⁷² Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', p.76-136.

²⁷³ Dusuki and Abdullah, 'Maqasid Al-Shari'ah, Maslahah, and Corporate Social Responsibility (2007)'; Bakar, *The Place and Role of Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah in the Ummah's 21st Century Civilisational Renewal*. *Islam and Civilisational Renewal*.

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