

THE CONCEPT OF *MASLAHAH* IN THE DYNAMICS OF THE RUKYAH AND HISAB METHODS FOR DETERMINING THE BEGINNING OF THE LUNAR MONTH

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ABSTRACT

Determining the beginning of the lunar month is a significant issue in Islamic tradition, especially in establishing the timing of religious observances such as Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr. The methods used for this determination, namely rukyah (moon sighting) and hisab (astronomical calculation), often lead to differing opinions among Muslims. This paper aims to analyze the dynamics between the rukyah and hisab methods through the lens of the *maslahah* theory, which emphasizes the achievement of good and the prevention of harm for the community. The analysis shows that the rukyah method is more relevant for determining the beginning of months related to major religious observances, as it aligns with sharia tradition and helps maintain the unity of the Muslim community. Conversely, the hisab method is more efficient for determining the start of months not directly related to religious observances, such as 1 Muharram, as it provides certainty and ease in planning. The conclusion of this paper is that integrating both methods, with an emphasis on their respective contexts, can optimize the *maslahah* for Muslims, ensure the smooth execution of religious practices, and support unity within the community.

Keyword: *Maslahah*, Rukyah, Hisab

ABSTRAK

Penentuan awal bulan Qomariyah menjadi isu penting dalam tradisi Islam, terutama dalam penetapan waktu ibadah seperti Ramadan dan Idul Fitri. Metode yang digunakan dalam penentuan ini, yaitu rukyah (pengamatan hilal) dan hisab (perhitungan astronomi), sering kali menimbulkan perbedaan pendapat di kalangan umat Islam. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dinamika antara metode rukyah dan hisab melalui pendekatan teori *maslahah*, yang menekankan pada pencapaian kebaikan dan pencegahan kerusakan bagi umat. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa metode rukyah lebih relevan diterapkan dalam penetapan awal bulan terkait ibadah utama, karena kesesuaiannya dengan tradisi syariat dan kemampuannya menjaga kesatuan umat. Sebaliknya, metode hisab lebih efisien digunakan untuk penetapan awal bulan yang tidak terkait langsung dengan ibadah, seperti 1 Muharram, karena memberikan kepastian dan kemudahan dalam perencanaan. Kesimpulan dari tulisan ini adalah bahwa integrasi kedua metode, dengan penekanan pada

konteks penerapannya masing-masing, dapat mengoptimalkan kemaslahatan bagi umat Islam, menjaga kelancaran pelaksanaan ibadah, dan mendukung kesatuan dalam masyarakat.

Kata kunci: *Maslahah*, Rukyah, Hisab

Introduction

Determining the beginning of the lunar month is a crucial aspect of religious practice for Muslims, particularly in setting the timing for worship and celebrating major holidays such as Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha. In Islamic tradition, the determination of the lunar month's start is not merely a ritual act but also has broad social, economic, and spiritual implications. Therefore, the method used to determine the beginning of the lunar month holds significant importance in maintaining harmony and unity within the Muslim community.

There are two main methods used in determining the beginning of the lunar month: the rukyah method (direct observation of the new moon) and the hisab method (astronomical calculations).¹ The rukyah method is often considered more traditional, as it is based on visual observation of the crescent moon. Meanwhile, the hisab method, which relies on mathematical and astronomical calculations, is viewed as more modern and scientific.

The differences between these two methods often become a source of debate among Muslims, especially when the results produced by the two methods do not align. Social dynamics within communities show that these differences can often lead to horizontal conflicts, causing tension and division.² For example, discrepancies between rukyah and hisab results in determining the beginning of Ramadan or Eid al-Fitr can lead to differences in worship practices, which, in turn, may create social divides among Muslims.

This dynamic is not limited to worship but also extends to the determination of the start of the Islamic New Year, 1446 H. For those who follow the rukyah method, it was determined that the new moon was not visible on the designated night, leading to the beginning of Muharram being set a day after the hisab calculation. On the other hand, those

¹ Bustanul Iman RN, "Penetapan Awal Bulan Qamariyah Perspektif Fiqh," *DIKTUM: Jurnal Syariah Dan Hukum* 14, no. 1 (2016): 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.35905/diktum.v14i1.220>.

² Ahmad Adib Rofiuddin, "Dinamika Sosial Penentuan Awal Bulan Hijriah Di Indonesia," *Istinbath* 18, no. 2 (2019), <https://www.istinbath.or.id/index.php/ijhi/article/view/166>.

using the hisab method, based on astronomical calculations, determined the start of the Islamic year a day earlier, as it had already met the calculation standards.

This social gap is further exacerbated by differing views among scholars and religious authorities in various regions. In Indonesia, where the differences in the start of the Hijriyyah month are often highlighted, the Nahdlatul Ulama' (NU) and Muhammadiyah organizations are typically in focus. NU tends to use rukyah, while Muhammadiyah favors hisab.³ These differences often create confusion among the general public, ultimately leading to non-uniform worship practices. This disagreement reflects the need for deeper consideration of the *maslahah* (public interest) of the Muslim community in determining which method to use.

In facing this situation, the concept of *maslahah* can serve as a bridge to unite these differences. The concept of *maslahah*, related to maqashid shariah, plays a crucial role in determining which method is more appropriate to use.⁴ Therefore, the decision to choose between rukyah and hisab should not be based solely on scientific accuracy or tradition but also on considerations of the overall benefit to the Muslim community. By understanding that the objective of shariah is to provide benefit to the community, both rukyah and hisab can be evaluated based on their impact on maqashid shariah.

Therefore, it is important to review the dynamics of rukyah and hisab methods within the broader framework of *maslahah*. With a comprehensive approach and considering maqashid shariah, it is hoped that a solution can be found that is not only scientifically correct, but also able to maintain the unity and harmony of the Muslim community.

The Concept of *Maslahah*

In Arabic, the term "*maslahah*" is often mentioned with the words "*al-maslahah, ash-shalah,*" with its plural form being "*al-mashalih.*"⁵ Al-Fairuz Abadi stated that "*ash-shalah*" is the opposite of "*al-fasad,*" and "*al-maslaha*" is the singular form of "*al-mashalih.*" The term "*istashlaha*" is the opposite of "*istafsada*". Ar-Rafi' emphasized that

³ Ahmad Izzuddin, *Ilmu Falak Praktis* (Semarang: Pustaka Rizki Putra, 2012).

⁴ Akbar Sarif dan Ridzwan Ahmad, "Konsep *Maslahah* dan Mafsadah Menurut Imam Al-Ghazzali," *TSAQAFAH* 13, no. 2 (30 November 2017): 353–68, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v13i2.1183>.

⁵ Ibn Manzur, *Lisān al-'Arab*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dar Shadir, 1994).

maslahah is the opposite of goodness, while *ash-shalah* is contrary to the meanings of “*asy-syar*” (evil) and “*al-fasad*” (destruction).⁶

In *Al-Mu’jam Al-Wasith*, it is mentioned that *maslahah* relates to an action that contains goodness. *Maslahah* is goodness and benefit. The phrase “*sholuha asy-sya’i*” is used when something is beneficial and suitable. The term “*ashlaha fi ‘amalihi*” is used when someone brings about something good and beneficial in their work. Therefore, the term *maslahah* is derived from the pattern “*maf’alatun*”, which originates from the word “*ash-shalah*”, meaning the perfection of something according to its owner's perspective.⁷

Some scholars hold the view that anything that can bring about benefit or prevent harm can be considered *maslahah*. Ramadhan Al-Buthi stated that anything that contains benefit, whether in the form of yielding advantage and pleasure or in the form of avoiding harm or disease, can rightly be called *maslahah*.⁸

Terminologically, there are many definitions of *maslahah*, and these definitions vary due to differing views among scholars regarding *maqasid shariah* (the objectives of Islamic law) in general, as well as the understanding and scope of *maslahah* in particular. Imam Al-Ghazali limited it to five aspects. He explained that *maslahah* is not only about achieving benefits and avoiding harm but also about preserving the objectives of *shariah*: protecting religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. Therefore, anything that contributes to the preservation of these fundamental aspects is considered *maslahah*.⁹

Ar-Razi provided a more comprehensive definition. He explained that *maslahah* is a concept through which the attainment of the objectives of *maqasid shariah*, related to either religion or worldly matters, is achieved.¹⁰ Al-Izz bin Abdissalam provided several perspectives that can collectively define *maslahah*. Among them, he explained that *mashalih* (benefits) and *mafasid* (harms) can be expressed as goodness and evil, benefit and harm, beauty and ugliness; because all *mashalih* are goodness, benefit, and beauty,

⁶ Abu Hasan bin Faris Ar-Razi, *Mu’jam Maqayis Al-Lughah*, vol. 3 (Mesir: Musthofa Al-Babi Al-Halbi, 1969).

⁷ Majma’ al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah, *Al-Mu’jam al-Wasī*, vol. 1 (Dar al-Da’wah, t.t.).

⁸ Muhammad Sa’id Ramadan Al-Buthi, *Dhawabit al-Maslahah fi asy-Syari’ah al-Islamiyah* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risalah, 1977).

⁹ Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Al-Mustashfa* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1993).

¹⁰ Fakhruddin Ar-Razi, *Al-Kasyaf’an Ushul Ad-Dalail wa Maqul Al-’Ilal*, 1992.

while all mafasid are evil, harm, and ugliness. In the Qur'an, the terms goodness and evil are often expressed as mashalih and mafasid, respectively.¹¹

Meanwhile, Ibn Taymiyyah discussed *maslahah* in accordance with shariah standards. He explained that *maslahah* occurs when a mujtahid (Islamic jurist) strongly believes that an action can bring about a benefit that is not contradicted by shariah.¹² Asy-Syatibi stated that *maslahah* is something that brings perfect pleasure to humans. He further explained that *maslahah* refers to anything that supports the establishment of human life, the perfection of their existence, and the fulfillment of their needs and desires, both physically and intellectually, so that humans truly experience perfect enjoyment.¹³

From the various definitions presented above, we can conclude that *maslahah* encompasses anything that can be realized through maqasid shariah, either by bringing benefit to people or by preventing harm from them, whether in the short or long term.

The Rukyah Method in Determining the Beginning of Lunar Month

The rukyah method for determining the beginning of the lunar month is a traditional approach used to ascertain when a new month in the Islamic calendar begins. Rukyah literally means "seeing," and in this context, it refers to the direct observation of the hilal, the first visible crescent moon after conjunction or ijtima' (when the moon aligns with the sun). The sighting of the hilal signals the end of the previous month and the beginning of a new month in the lunar calendar. This method has been used by Muslims since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and continues to be a reference in many Muslim-majority countries, including Indonesia.¹⁴

The rukyah method is typically conducted on the 29th day of the lunar month, after sunset in the western horizon. If the hilal is sighted, that evening is considered the beginning of the new month. However, if the hilal is not sighted, the current month is

¹¹ Izzuddin ibn Abd As-Salam, *Qawā'id al-Ahkām fī Maṣālih al-Anām*, vol. 1 (Mesir: Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1991).

¹² Ibnu Taimiyyah, *Majmu' Al-Fatawa* (Madinah: Al-Mamlakah Al-'Arabiyyah Al-Saudiyyah, 1995).

¹³ Ibrahim bin Musa Asy-Syatibi, *Al-Muwafaqat*, vol. 2 (Dar Ibn 'Affan, 1997).

¹⁴ Jaenal Arifin, "Fiqh Hisab Rukyah Di Indonesia (Telaah Sistem Penetapan Awal Bulan Qamariyyah)," *YUDISIA: Jurnal Pemikiran Hukum Dan Hukum Islam* 5, no. 2 (20 Januari 2016), <https://doi.org/10.21043/yudisia.v5i2.704>.

completed with 30 days.¹⁵ Traditionally, rukyah was performed with the naked eye, but with the advancement of time and technology, the observation of the hilal can now be done using telescopes or other optical instruments.¹⁶ Despite these advancements, naked-eye rukyah is still considered a valid method by many, particularly within the Islamic tradition in Indonesia.

The legal basis for the rukyah method in determining the beginning of the lunar month is derived from the Qur'an, Hadith, and the consensus (*ijma'*) of scholars. In the Qur'an, Allah SWT states in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 185. This verse implicitly suggests the importance of rukyah, or the observation of the hilal, as a means of determining the start of Ramadan. The verse serves as the basis for using hilal observation to determine the timing of worship connected to the lunar calendar. The verse is as follows:

فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۗ

“So whoever of you sights [the crescent of] the month, let him fast it.”

In addition, there are Hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) that directly instruct the use of rukyah in determining the beginning of the month. Several Hadiths are commonly cited as the foundation, emphasizing that the determination of the lunar month, especially Ramadan and Shawwal, should be based on the sighting of the hilal, and if the sight is obstructed, then the month should be completed with 30 days. These Hadiths include:

حَدَّثَنَا آدَمُ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ زَيْدٍ، قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، يَقُولُ:
قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: أَوْ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو الْقَاسِمِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «صُومُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ
وَأَفْطَرُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ، فَإِنْ غُيِّبَ عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَكْمِلُوا عِدَّةَ شَعْبَانَ ثَلَاثِينَ»

“Fast when you see the crescent, and break your fast when you see it; if it is obscured, then complete the month of Sha’ban with thirty days.”

¹⁵ Rahma Amir, “Metodologi Perumusan Awal Bulan Kamariyah Di Indonesia,” *ELFALAKY: Jurnal Ilmu Falak* 1, no. 1 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.24252/ifk.v1i1.6434>.

¹⁶ Alamsyah dkk., “Law of the Use of Light Contrast Photometry of Hilal Visibility to Determining the Early Month,” vol. 1 (Proceeding 1st International Conference on Actual Islamic Studies (ICAIS) 2022, Makassar, 2022), <https://prosiding.icaisunismuh.org/index.php/3rd/article/view/26>.

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ يَحْيَى، قَالَ: قَرَأْتُ عَلَى مَالِكٍ، عَنْ نَافِعٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ ذَكَرَ رَمَضَانَ فَقَالَ: «لَا تَصُومُوا حَتَّى تَرَوْا الْهِلَالَ، وَلَا تُفْطِرُوا حَتَّى تَرَوْهُ، فَإِنْ أُغْمِيَ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاقْدِرُوا لَهُ»

“The Prophet mentioned Ramadan and said: Do not fast until you see the crescent, and do not break your fast until you see it; if it is obscured by clouds, then estimate it.”

The consensus (*ijma'*) of scholars also serves as a strong legal foundation for the use of the rukyah method. The majority of scholars from various schools of thought, such as Shafi'i, Maliki, and Abu Hanifah, agree that rukyah is a valid and recommended method for determining the beginning of the lunar month.¹⁷ They argue that the observation of the hilal is in accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW) and is the method most consistent with the principles of Islamic law. Although there are differing opinions between rukyah and hisab, the rukyah method still holds strong legitimacy within Islamic tradition.

In Indonesia, the legal basis for the rukyah method is also supported by decisions from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and the government. MUI, through various fatwas (such as Fatwa MUI Number 2 of 2004 on the Determination of the Beginning of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah), emphasizes the importance of rukyah in determining the beginning of the month, especially for Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah. The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, regularly holds "itsbat" sessions to determine the beginning of the lunar month based on rukyah results, while also considering hisab results.¹⁸ This policy shows that the rukyah method is still recognized as the primary method for determining the beginning of the month in Indonesia, with strong legal backing from both sharia and regulations.

Technically, the rukyah method involves observing the hilal (the first crescent moon) after sunset on the 29th day of the lunar month. This observation is conducted on the western horizon, where the hilal typically appears. The rukyah is usually performed by a team consisting of experts in astronomy, scholars, and religious authorities, as commonly practiced in Indonesia. Observation sites are selected based on specific criteria, such as

¹⁷ RN, “PENETAPAN AWAL BULAN QAMARIYAH PERSPEKTIF FIQH | DIKTUM.”

¹⁸ Fuad Thohari, “Fatwa MUI Tentang Penentuan Awal Ramadhan, Syawal, Dan Dzû Al-Hijjah (Upaya Rekonstruksi Metodologis),” *Al-’Adalah* 8, no. 2 (2017): 179–84.

altitude and openness of the horizon, to maximize the chances of sighting the hilal. Observations are typically conducted simultaneously at various locations, and the results are reported to the government for a decision to be made in the “*itsbat*” session.

However, in practice, the rukyah method faces challenges, particularly when weather conditions are unfavorable. In such situations, many scholars recommend “*istikmal*”, which involves completing the current month with 30 days. This recommendation is based on the principle of caution to avoid errors in determining the beginning of the month.¹⁹

In addition to technical challenges, there are also differences of opinion among scholars regarding the rukyah method. For example, there is a debate over the number of witnesses required to confirm the hilal. According to Imam Malik, there should be two or more reliable witnesses, while the Shafi’i and Hanbali schools state that a single witness is sufficient to establish the beginning of the fasting month.²⁰ These differences reflect the dynamics in the practice of rukyah within various Muslim communities.

Despite these challenges, the rukyah method, as inherited from the time of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), continues to hold an important place in Islamic tradition. However, with the advancement of science and technology, there is a need for a more dynamic and open approach to accommodate the changing times. The rukyah method, with all its advantages, remains one of the most reliable ways to determine the beginning of the lunar month, even though debates and challenges surrounding this method persist.

The implementation of the rukyah method in Indonesia has been ongoing for a long time and continues to be upheld as one of the main methods for determining the beginning of the lunar month. The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, routinely conducts hilal observations at various strategic locations across the country. This process is carried out in the lead-up to significant months in the Islamic calendar, such as Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah. Hilal observations are conducted based on government decisions involving various parties, including astronomers, scholars, and religious authorities,²¹ and the results are used to make official decisions in the *itsbat* session.

¹⁹ Amir, “Metodologi Perumusan Awal Bulan Kamariah Di Indonesia.”

²⁰ Amir.

²¹ Siti Tatmainul Qulub dan Ahmad Munif, “Urgensi Fatwa dan Sidang Isbat dalam Penentuan Awal Bulan Kamariah di Indonesia: The Urgency of Fatwa and Isbat Assemblies in Determining the Beginning of

One of the largest religious organizations in Indonesia that consistently uses the rukyah method is Nahdlatul Ulama (NU).²² NU views rukyah as a method that aligns with the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and routinely conducts hilal observations every time the end of a lunar month approaches. In addition to conducting its own rukyah, NU also participates in rukyah activities organized by the government, and these observations are then reported to the government for a decision in the itsbat session. For NU, rukyah is not just a technical method but also has a strong spiritual dimension, as it is considered the most authentic way to follow the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).²³

The Hisab Method in Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Month

The hisab method for determining the beginning of the lunar month is a method that uses mathematical and astronomical calculations to determine the position of the moon. Hisab, derived from the Arabic word meaning “calculation”, is used in the context of Islamic calendrical calculations to predict the time when the hilal or first crescent moon will appear after conjunction (ijtima').²⁴ This method is considered more scientific because it is based on measurable astronomical data, allowing predictions to be made long before the hilal is actually sighted.

Hisab has been used throughout Islamic history by various scholars and scientists, especially to facilitate the determination of important times in the Islamic calendar. The use of hisab has become increasingly relevant with the advancement of technology and the ability to calculate the moon's position with greater precision. In practice, the hisab method is not only used to determine the beginning of Ramadan and Shawwal but also to predict eclipses.²⁵

the Month of Kamariah in Indonesia,” *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 16, no. 2 (29 Desember 2022): 423–52, <https://doi.org/10.37302/jbi.v16i2.929>.

²² Lajnah Falakiah Pengurus Besar Nahdhatul Ulama, *Pedoman Rukyat dan Hisab Nahdlatul Ulama* (Jakarta: LF PBNU, 2006).

²³ Miftahul Ulum, “Fatwa Ulama NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) Dan Muhammadiyah Jawa Timur Tentang Hisab Rukyat,” *Jurnal Keislaman* 1, no. 2 (1 September 2018): 244–72, <https://doi.org/10.54298/jk.v1i2.3369>.

²⁴ Ali Imron, “Pemaknaan Hadis-Hadis Hisab-Rukyat Muhammadiyah Dan Kontroversi Yang Melingkupinya,” *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 15, no. 1 (13 Januari 2014): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2014.1501-01>.

²⁵ Wahyu Widianana, “Penentuan Awal Bulan Qomariyah Dan Permasalahannya Di Indonesia,” *Al-Ulum* 10, no. 2 (2010): 253–66.

One of the legal foundations for the hisab method in determining the beginning of the month is found in Surah Yunus: 5:

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَاءً وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا وَقَدَرَهُ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ ۗ

“It is He who made the sun a shining light and the moon a derived light and determined for it phases—that you may know the number of years and account [of time].”

In this verse, Allah SWT emphasizes that the celestial bodies, such as the sun and the moon, orbit in their paths according to precise laws set by Him. Therefore, the movements of these celestial bodies can be calculated (hisab) accurately. The emphasis of these verses is not merely an informative statement, as the movements of the sun and moon can be calculated and predicted by humans, even without divine revelation.²⁶

Classical scholars such as Al-Khawarizmi, Al-Biruni, and Al-Batani also supported the use of hisab. Accurate astronomical calculations can serve as a legitimate tool in determining the beginning of the lunar month, as long as they do not contradict the principles of shariah. This view is based on the understanding that Islam does not reject science and that more scientific methods can be used to support religious practices.

In Indonesia, the hisab method is also officially recognized by the government and religious organizations.²⁷ Although the government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, prioritizes rukyah, hisab is still used as a reference in the process of determining the beginning of the month. This is evident in decisions made during the itsbat sessions, where hisab results are used to verify the hilal observations. Thus, hisab has a strong legal basis as one of the methods for determining the beginning of the lunar month in Indonesia.

Muhammadiyah, one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, consistently uses the hisab method. This organization believes that hisab provides greater certainty and accuracy compared to rukyah, especially in uncertain weather conditions.²⁸ Muhammadiyah uses hisab to determine the dates for the beginning of Ramadan, Shawwal,

²⁶ RN, “PENETAPAN AWAL BULAN QAMARIYAH PERSPEKTIF FIQH | DIKTUM.”

²⁷ Amir, “Metodologi Perumusan Awal Bulan Kamariyah Di Indonesia.”

²⁸ Marataon Ritonga dkk., “Transformasi Hisab-Rukyat Dalam Penentuan Awal Bulan Hijriah Di Muhammadiyah,” *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Agama Dan Ilmu Pengetahuan* 21, no. 1 (1 Mei 2024): 83–92, [https://doi.org/10.25299/al-hikmah:jaip.2024.vol21\(1\).14676](https://doi.org/10.25299/al-hikmah:jaip.2024.vol21(1).14676).

and Dhu al-Hijjah, and its results are often announced well before the hilal observations are conducted.

Technically, the hisab method involves calculating the positions of the moon and sun using astronomical data. This calculation includes several important parameters, such as elongation (the angular distance between the moon and the sun), the altitude of the moon above the horizon, and the time of sunset.²⁹ Using this data, hisab experts can estimate when the hilal will be visible at various locations on Earth. This process can be carried out long before the actual observation of the hilal, providing greater certainty regarding timing.

Modern hisab uses computer technology to perform these calculations with very high accuracy. Programs like Stellarium and Accurate Times are commonly used by astronomers and hisab experts to predict the position of the moon. Data from modern observatories also helps ensure that hisab results are accurate and reliable.³⁰ This method allows muslims to know the beginning of the lunar month well in advance, which is very useful for planning religious activities.

Additionally, the hisab method also considers the visibility criteria of the hilal, known as “imkanur rukyah”. This criterion stipulates that the hilal must have a minimum altitude above the horizon and a certain elongation to be visible.³¹ Thus, hisab not only serves as a calculation tool but also as a guide to ensure that the hilal can be physically seen, although rukyah is still necessary for confirmation.

Although hisab offers many advantages, this method is not without its challenges. One of the main challenges is the discrepancy between hisab and rukyah results, which often leads to debates among Muslims. Some groups reject hisab results if they differ from rukyah, arguing that rukyah is the method taught by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).³²

²⁹ Muhammad Nurkhanif dkk., “Syar’i and Astronomy Integration to Determine the Beginning of Hijri Calendar: A Study of Elongation to Prove the Hilâl Testimony,” *ULUL ALBAB Jurnal Studi Islam* 23, no. 2 (27 Desember 2022): 183–207, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v23i2.17489>.

³⁰ Andy Muhammad Ruknanto Andy, Fatmawati, dan Faisal Akib, “Komparasi Software Stellarium dan Accurate Times dalam Penentuan Waktu Salat Duhur,” *HISABUNA: Jurnal Ilmu Falak* 4, no. 1 (30 Juni 2022): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.24252/hisabuna.v4i1.36131>.

³¹ Anugrah Reskiani dan Rahman Subhan, “Analisis Visibilitas Hilal sebagai Acuan Penentuan Awal Bulan Kamariyah,” *ELFALAKY: Jurnal Ilmu Falak* 6, no. 1 (30 Juni 2022): 96–110, <https://doi.org/10.24252/ifk.v6i1.26772>.

³² Shofwatul Aini, “Disparitas Antara Hisab Dan Rukyat: Akar Perbedaan Dan Kompleksitas Percabangannya,” *Muslim Heritage* 2, no. 1 (16 Agustus 2017): 19–42, <https://doi.org/10.21154/muslimheritage.v2i1.1044>.

These differences often cause disagreements in determining the beginning of the month, especially during Ramadan and Shawwal.

Another challenge is the public's trust in hisab results. Despite the fact that hisab is supported by accurate scientific data, some Muslims feel more comfortable with rukyah, which is visual and involves direct observation of the hilal. This is because rukyah is seen as more in line with Islamic tradition. Therefore, education and socialization about the hisab method are still needed to increase public acceptance of this method.

Technical challenges also exist, particularly related to differences in the systems and references used in hisab. In Indonesia, there are several different hisab methods, such as contemporary hisab and urfi hisab. These differences can result in varying data, especially regarding the altitude of the hilal and the time of sunset.³³ Therefore, efforts are needed to harmonize the hisab methods in Indonesia to ensure that the results are more uniform and acceptable to all parties.

The implementation of the hisab method in Indonesia is heavily influenced by religious organizations with differing views on the best way to determine the beginning of the lunar month. Muhammadiyah, as one of the largest Islamic organizations, is a pioneer in the consistent use of the hisab method. Every year, Muhammadiyah issues a calendar based on hisab calculations, which includes the determination of the beginning of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah. Muhammadiyah's hisab results are often announced well before the hilal observation, serving as a guide for its members in performing their religious duties.

In addition to Muhammadiyah, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, also uses the hisab method as a reference in determining the beginning of the lunar month. Although rukyah results remain the basis in itsbat sessions, hisab results are used to verify and predict when the hilal might be sighted. Thus, the hisab method plays an important role in the process of determining the beginning of the month by the government, even though hilal observation is still necessary for final confirmation.

The implementation of hisab is also evident in the compilation of the Islamic calendar published nationally by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This calendar, used by many Muslims in Indonesia, combines hisab and rukyah results to determine important dates

³³ Arifin, "Fiqih Hisab Rukyah Di Indonesia (Telaah Sistem Penetapan Awal Bulan Qamariyyah)."

throughout the year.³⁴ Furthermore, Islamic educational institutions also teach the hisab method as part of the curriculum, enabling the younger generation of Muslims in Indonesia to understand and use this method in their lives.³⁵ Thus, hisab has become an integral part of religious practice in Indonesia, though it is still balanced with the rukyah method as a complement.

***Maslahah* as a Solution in the Differences Between Rukyah and Hisab Methods in Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Month**

The rukyah and hisab methods for determining the beginning of the lunar month have a long history in Islamic tradition, and both have become integral parts of Muslim religious practice. However, the differences between these two methods often lead to social and religious dynamics, especially when their results differ in determining the start of Ramadan, Shawwal, or Dhu al-Hijjah. In this context, the theory of *maslahah*, or public interest, can serve as an important analytical tool to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of both methods and to determine which method is more beneficial for the Muslim community.

Maslahah, meaning benefit or welfare, in the context of Islamic law refers to anything that brings about good and prevents harm for humanity. Applying the theory of *maslahah* in determining the beginning of the lunar month provides clearer guidance on when the rukyah and hisab methods should be applied. In this case, we can utilize the strengths of each method based on the objectives of shariah (*maqasid shariah*) and their relevance to various types of worship.

The rukyah method, which was explicitly taught by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), has a high shariah value when applied to determining the beginning of months related to major Islamic observances, such as Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha. These acts of worship are among the main pillars of Islam, and the certainty of their timing is crucial to maintaining unity and order in the performance of these rituals among the Muslim

³⁴ A. Jusran Kasim dkk., "Determination of Hijri Calendar in Islamic History and Its Criteria in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 19, no. 1 (30 Juni 2024): 247–59, <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol19no1.18>.

³⁵ Soni Zakaria dan Zulfikar Yusuf, "Pelatihan Hisab Berbasis Aplikasi Bagi Pelajar Muhammadiyah Batu," *NAJWA: Jurnal Pengabdian Dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat* 1, no. 1 (23 Agustus 2023): 67–75, <https://doi.org/10.30762/najwa.v1i1.163>.

community. Therefore, following the Sunnah by observing the hilal to determine the beginning of these months is the most beneficial course of action.

Rukyah, which involves the direct observation of the hilal, carries deep spiritual significance. When Muslims collectively witness the hilal, it strengthens the sense of community and adherence to the Sunnah of the Prophet. Additionally, since acts of worship like fasting during Ramadan and celebrating Eid al-Fitr are closely tied to the sighting of the hilal, using rukyah to confirm the start of the month can provide Muslims with a sense of certainty and inner peace. In this regard, rukyah clearly offers *maslahah* by fulfilling the spiritual needs of the community and maintaining social harmony.

However, there are situations where rukyah may be difficult to perform, such as due to unfavorable weather conditions or other technical challenges. In such cases, the hisab method can be used as an auxiliary tool, though rukyah results should still be the primary reference. Thus, the *maslahah* of ensuring timely and uniform worship can be achieved through a combination of both methods, with priority given to rukyah when it comes to major acts of worship.

On the other hand, for determining the beginning of months not directly related to worship, such as 1 Muharram (the Islamic New Year), the hisab method can be considered more beneficial. The determination of these months does not impact the performance of obligatory acts of worship that require precise timing, so using hisab, which is more practical and can be predicted well in advance, is sufficient. With the hisab method, Muslims can know with certainty when the Islamic New Year will begin without having to wait for the hilal observation results.

In determining the beginning of months not associated with obligatory worship, such as 1 Muharram, the use of hisab not only provides convenience but also efficiency. Hisab allows the date to be determined more quickly without waiting for rukyah results, which can sometimes be delayed due to technical factors. This is a form of *maslahah* in terms of using time and resources more efficiently.

Although there are differences in the determination of 1 Muharram among some Muslim countries using hisab and rukyah methods, these differences do not directly impact the worship practices of the community. Therefore, the hisab method can be widely accepted for setting this date without sacrificing deeper shariah principles. This also reduces the

potential for differences that could cause confusion among the community in matters that do not have direct religious consequences.

The use of hisab for determining non-worship months also supports long-term planning in religious and social activities. The Islamic calendar, compiled based on hisab, provides certainty of dates for Islamic observances, which is important for preparing and carrying out religious or social events not related to obligatory worship. Thus, hisab provides *maslahah* in the form of certainty and ease in planning.

Overall, the theory of *maslahah* guides us to use rukyah in the context of obligatory worship that has deep spiritual implications, while hisab can be applied to more practical aspects that are not directly related to obligatory worship. In this way, each method can be applied according to its strengths and relevance, achieving a balance between upholding shariah traditions and utilizing scientific advancements for the benefit of the community.

Using hisab for determining the beginning of months like 1 Muharram and other months can also minimize potential debates and differences among Muslims. Since there is no direct impact on worship practices, the use of hisab in this context can be more easily accepted by various groups. This also supports the principle of unity and harmony within the Muslim community, which is an important goal of maqasid shariah.

In relation to maqasid shariah, according to Imam Al-Ghazali, *maslahah* is also related to the five main objectives of shariah (maqasid shariah), namely preserving religion, life, intellect, progeny, and wealth. In this analysis, we will see how rukyah and hisab contribute to achieving these objectives and which one better fulfills the principles of *maslahah*.

In the context of preserving religion (*hifz al-din*), the rukyah method has an advantage because it is directly based on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), who instructed the observation of the hilal to determine the beginning of the month. Rukyah symbolizes obedience to the Sunnah and upholds the Prophet's tradition in performing worship. However, hisab, while not explicitly mentioned in the Sunnah, can still support this objective by providing certainty in determining the timing of worship, which is also part of preserving religion.

From the perspective of preserving life (*hifz al-nafs*), the hisab method can be considered more beneficial in situations where hilal observation is difficult, such as in bad weather conditions or in areas with high light pollution. Hisab provides certainty of time

without having to wait for observations that may sometimes be impossible, allowing the community to prepare for their worship with greater ease and without anxiety.

In terms of preserving intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), hisab demonstrates the important role of knowledge and technology in supporting the performance of worship. Hisab utilizes advancements in astronomy to ensure the accuracy of time determination, which aligns with Islamic teachings that value knowledge. Thus, the hisab method can be seen as a form of *maslahah* that appreciates rational and scientific thinking.

Regarding the preservation of progeny (*hifz al-nasl*) and wealth (*hifz al-mal*), the hisab method can offer significant practical benefits. With predictions that can be made well in advance, Muslims can better plan their family and financial activities, such as preparing for the Islamic New Year, the Prophet's birthday celebration, and other events without uncertainty. This shows that hisab can provide convenience and certainty in daily life, which is an important aspect of *maslahah*.

However, the rukyah method also has advantages from the perspective of *maslahah*. Rukyah often involves community participation in observing the hilal, which can strengthen social bonds and togetherness within the Muslim community. This process creates a collective religious experience and reinforces Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*), which is part of *maslahah* in maintaining community unity. Therefore, rukyah is not only a technical activity but also has strong social value.

Nevertheless, the dynamics between rukyah and hisab often lead to differences in the determination of the beginning of the month in various regions, which in turn can cause confusion and division among the community. From the perspective of *maslahah*, this division is a harm (*mafsadah*) that should be avoided. Therefore, an approach that integrates both methods or at least unifies their results is needed to prevent division among Muslims in their worship practices.

An approach that combines rukyah and hisab, as implemented by some Muslim countries, can be seen as an effort to achieve *maslahah* by reducing potential differences and tensions. In this approach, hisab is used as a guide to estimate the possibility of hilal sighting, while rukyah is used as the final confirmation. This approach not only preserves tradition but also utilizes science to achieve certainty.

In the global context, the hisab method also offers *maslahah* in terms of uniting Muslims worldwide. With calculations accessible to all countries, hisab enables uniformity in determining the beginning of the lunar month. This can reduce differences in the determination of the Islamic New Year and Islamic holidays among Muslim countries, which often causes confusion among Muslims scattered around the world.

However, in its implementation, hisab still faces challenges, especially in terms of acceptance by communities that still prioritize rukyah. Education and socialization about the benefits of hisab in the modern context are important to ensure that Muslims can accept this method as part of their religious practice. This aligns with the principle of *maslahah*, where any method used should bring benefits that are acceptable to the community.

In this analysis, it is evident that both rukyah and hisab have their respective advantages from the perspective of *maslahah*. Rukyah offers strong religious and social value, while hisab provides certainty and ease in planning. Therefore, an approach that integrates both methods, or at least unifies their results, can be considered the most beneficial solution for the Muslim community.

Thus, from the perspective of the theory of *maslahah*, both rukyah and hisab can be used in determining the beginning of the lunar month, as long as both support the main objectives of shariah, which are to bring good and prevent harm for the community. Integrating the two, or adjusting their implementation, is important to ensure that Muslims can perform their worship with peace of mind, without division or uncertainty.

Moreover, the application of the hisab and rukyah methods according to their respective contexts demonstrates the flexibility of Islamic law in facing the challenges of the times. Rukyah remains relevant and important for major acts of worship that require precise timing and uniformity, while hisab offers practical solutions for determining the beginning of months that are not directly related to worship. This approach not only ensures *maslahah* in the implementation of shariah but also supports the unity of the Muslim community amid existing differences.

Conclusion

The dynamics between the rukyah and hisab methods, when viewed through the concept of *maslahah*, reveal that each method has its strengths and relevance in specific

situations. Rukyah, with its strong foundation in tradition and spirituality, is more suitable for determining the beginning of months related to major acts of worship, such as Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr, where the certainty of timing and the unity of the Muslim community are crucial. On the other hand, hisab offers accuracy and ease in planning, particularly for the determination of months not directly associated with obligatory worship, such as 1 Muharram.

The application of these two methods according to their respective contexts reflects a balance between shariah tradition and the advancement of science. Thus, using rukyah for major religious observances and hisab for determining other months can optimize the *maslahah* for the Muslim community, ensuring the smooth performance of worship and supporting unity and harmony within society.

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