

Bureaucratizing *Ḥisāb-Ru'ya*: Polycentric Islamic Legal Authority in Determining Ramaḍān in Indonesia

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Abstract:

Determining Ramaḍān in Indonesia raises questions about the relationship between religious autonomy and state administrative authority. This article examines how religious organizations and the state distribute, negotiate, and institutionalize Islamic legal authority. Using socio-legal and philosophical approaches, it analyzes regulations, institutional documents, and religious decisions. The findings identify a polycentric structure in which Nahdlatul Ulama's *ihkbār*, Muhammadiyah's *maklumat*, and the government's *ithbāt* derive legitimacy from distinct but interacting normative and institutional foundations. Islamic legal pluralism therefore reflects both differing *fiqh* interpretations and multiple institutions claiming authority to operationalize Islamic norms. Bureaucratization translates religious reasoning into administrative decisions shaped by public authority, substantive standards, procedural legitimacy, and institutional accountability, while preserving non-state sources of religious authority. The state consequently coordinates religious governance without monopolizing Islamic legal interpretation. The article recommends a legally structured, participatory framework for institutionalizing *ḥisāb-ru'ya* that clarifies institutional responsibilities, coordinates governmental and religious authorities, and safeguards organizational autonomy and the plurality of *ijtihad* within Indonesia's system of Islamic legal governance.

Keywords:

bureaucratization of Islamic law; *ḥisāb-ru'ya*; Islamic legal authority; legal pluralism; polycentric governance

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Introduction

Determining the start of lunar months in Indonesia, particularly Ramaḍān, has long been a major concern for the Indonesian Muslim community.¹ Determining the start of Ramaḍān reveals multiple sources of Islamic legal authority operating simultaneously within a single religious legal sphere.² Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), through its *ikhbār* (formal announcement), and Muhammadiyah, through its *maklumat* (official decree), represent normative-organizational authorities that derive their legitimacy from Islamic jurisprudential traditions, methodological *ijtihād*, the authority of religious scholars, and their respective institutional mechanisms. The government, through *ithbāt* (official state determination),³ represents a legal-administrative authority grounded in the state's public mandate and the Ministry of Religious Affairs' official procedures. These differing sources of legitimacy result in varying subjects and degrees of binding force. The *ikhbār* and *maklumat* primarily serve as normative guidelines for religious communities that acknowledge the authority of the issuing organizations. In contrast, the *ithbāt* functions as an official state ruling and a public administrative reference. This configuration demonstrates that Islamic legal authority in Indonesia is not concentrated in a single institution but is distributed among religious organizations and the state.

¹ Zufriani Zufriani et al., "Rukyat as Determination of the Lunar Month Beginning: A Method, Obstacles, and Debate in Indonesia," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 22, no. 1 (June 2023): 53–67, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v22i1.6570>.

² N. Hosen, "Hilal and Halal: How to Manage Islamic Pluralism in Indonesia?," *Asian Journal of Comparative Law* 7 (2012): null, <https://doi.org/10.1515/1932-0205.1418>; Marifat Kilwakit and Arif Zamhari, "Cultural Syncretism and Religious Authority: Early Ramaḍān Determination Practices in Maluku," *Ibda': Jurnal Kajian Islam dan Budaya* 23, no. 1 (April 2025): 67–88, <https://doi.org/10.24090/ibda.v23i1.12973>.

³ Suhar Am et al., "The Collective Ijtihad Practice in Indonesia: The Role of Isbat Sessions in Addressing Legal Paradigm Differences Between Hisab-Rukyat," *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan* 24, no. 2 (December 2024): 105–23, <https://doi.org/10.30631/alrisalah.v24i2.1537>.

In recent years, determining the beginning of the lunar months has involved religious authority,⁴ social legitimacy,⁵ institutional authority,⁶ and the country's political dynamics.⁷ The differences in methods among NU, Muhammadiyah, and the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs demonstrate epistemological contestations and negotiations of authority within the Indonesian Islamic public sphere.⁸ These contestations represent competing claims to religious authority and public legitimacy.⁹ The determination of Ramaḍān, therefore, provides a crucial arena for Islamic legal studies to examine how Islamic legal authority is established, legitimized, accepted, and circumscribed within Muslim societies that lack a single, unified religious authority. Furthermore, the research gap lies in the lack of an adequate explanation of how the three products used to determine the start of Ramaḍān acquire legal legitimacy, which product holds binding authority, and how the normative authority of Islamic organizations interacts with the state's legal-administrative authority.

Academic scholarship has devoted considerable attention to this plurality, yet the orientation remains fragmented. Nadirsyah Hosen views the determination of the start of Ramaḍān as part of the broader challenge of

⁴ Marwadi, Mughni Labib, and Muhammad Fuad Zain, "Reforming the Islamic Calendar and Religious Authority: Dynamics of Hijri Calendar Calculation in Indonesia within Persatuan Islam's Thought," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 19, no. 1 (January 2025): 149, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v19i1.10574>.

⁵ Nuril Fathoni Hamas, Sela Septi Andri, and Ahmad Izzuddin, "The Hisab-Rukyat Method and Religious Tolerance: A Social Interpretation of Pancasila Values," *Pancasila: Jurnal Keindonesiaan* 5, no. 2 (October 2025): 288–98, <https://doi.org/10.52738/pjkv5i2.857>.

⁶ Hosen, "Hilal and Halal: How to Manage Islamic Pluralism in Indonesia?"; Kilwakit and Arif Zamhari, "Cultural Syncretism and Religious Authority."

⁷ Wildani Hefni, "Ideological Political Contestation in the Discourse of Hisab Rukyat in Indonesia," *Jurnal Penelitian* 16, no. 1 (2019): 79–90; Abdul Aziz, "Socio-Political and Psychological Factors of Ulil Amri in Determining the Beginning of the Hijri Month," *Journal of Syntax Transformation* 4, no. 11 (November 2023): 180, <https://doi.org/10.46799/jstv4i11.859>.

⁸ Sakirman Sakirman and A. Jamil, "The Concept of the Meeting Point of Hisab and Rukyat of the Beginning of the Hijri Month," *Nizham Journal of Islamic Studies* 12, no. 01 (May 2024): 122–38, <https://doi.org/10.32332/nizham.v12i01.9117>; Ilham Majid, "Maqasid al-Syari'ah Analysis of Dualism of Authority in Determining the Beginning of The Lunar Month: A Study of The Isbat of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and The Ikhhār of the Council of Tarjih Muhammadiyah," *Proceeding International Conference on Religion, Science and Education* 4 (April 2025): 767–74; Muh Arif Royyani et al., "Shahadah 'Ilmy: Integrating Fiqh and Astronomy Paradigm in Determining The Arrival of Lunar Months in Indonesia," *Al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 16, no. 2 (2021): 503–24, <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-ihkam.v16i2.5320>.

⁹ Ahmad Adib Rofuiddin and Ahmad Luqman Hakim, "NGOs Contestation on Islamic Hijri Calendar in Urban Muslim Society in Indonesia: From Authority to Identity," *Akademika: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 27, no. 2 (November 2022): 171, <https://doi.org/10.32332/akademika.v27i2.5357>.

managing Islamic pluralism and the tensions between the government and religious organizations. This study serves as a crucial starting point, demonstrating that determining Ramaḍān concerns the distribution of authority between the state and Islamic organizations.¹⁰ Harfin Zuhdi demonstrates that legal certainty relies more on effective state authority than on mere precision in calculation. The study's findings suggest that strengthening government authority—while maintaining doctrinal pluralism—offers a more viable path toward harmonizing the determination of the month's start.¹¹ Yandi's study specifically compares the application of *maṭla'* (lunar visibility zones) and the methods used by NU and Muhammadiyah to determine the start of Ramaḍān.¹² Fanani examines Muhammadiyah's *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence) for determining the start of Ramaḍān and Shawwāl, as well as its shift from the *wujūd al-hilāl* (existence of the new moon) criterion to a global Hijri calendar.¹³ Jalili, Ulfa, and Sahid analyze NU's *ijtihād* methods and the validity of its legal rulings,¹⁴ while Hayati compares how the MUI, Muhammadiyah, and NU contextualize fatwas.¹⁵ While this body of literature successfully elucidates *ijtihād* methods, the plurality of interpretations, and the institutionalization of fatwas, it has not yet made the distinct juridical characters of *ikhbār*, *maklumat*, and *ithbāt* the primary focus of analysis. Meanwhile, Hyung-Jun Kim's research on the formation of religious authority shows that such authority's legitimacy does not stem solely from traditional scholarly qualifications but can also be shaped by social practices, leadership, and

¹⁰ Hosen, "Hilal and Halal: How to Manage Islamic Pluralism in Indonesia?"

¹¹ Muhammad Harfin Zuhdi et al., "Unifying the Hijri Calendar: A Fiqh al-Siyāsa Model for Legal Authority and Certainty," *Al-Ahkam* 36, no. 1 (July 2026): 165–90, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ahkam.2026.36.1.29009>.

¹² Akmal Yandi, "Differences Between Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in the Application of the Wilayat Hukmi Matlak to the Determination of the Beginning of the Month of Ramaḍān," *Al-Maslahah: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 20, no. 1 (August 2024): 72–91, <https://doi.org/10.24260/al-maslahah.v20i1.2857>.

¹³ Ahwan Fanani, Tholkhatul Khoir, and Shahrin bin Hashim, "Muhammadiyah's Uṣūl al-Fiqh in Determining the Beginning of Ramaḍān and Syawwāl Months," *International Journal Ihya' Ulum al-Din* 27, no. 2 (December 2025): 89–104, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ihya.27.2.29716>.

¹⁴ Ismail Jalili, Fadillah Ulfa, and Mualimin Mochammad Sahid, "Nahdlatul Ulama's Ijtihad Method in Fatwa: Analysis of the Content of Legal Decisions and Their Validity in Indonesia," *Justicia Islamica* 20, no. 2 (November 2023): 341–60, <https://doi.org/10.21154/justicia.v20i2.5971>.

¹⁵ Ilda Hayati et al., "Contextualizing Fatwas amid Social Change: A Maqasid-Based Comparative Framework of Legal Reasoning in MUI, Muhammadiyah, and Nahdlatul Ulama," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 11, no. 2 (July 2026): 494–522, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v11i2.15361>.

community acceptance.¹⁶ Literature on fatwa authority reinforces the argument that the binding nature of Islamic law is not always synonymous with the coercive power of the state.¹⁷ Widigdo and Hamid find that fatwas are not inherently legally binding norms; rather, they gain effectiveness and authority when public acceptance, social institutions, or state power support them.¹⁸ Collectively, these studies highlight the need to distinguish between formal legal bindingness and normative-social bindingness. While NU's *ikhbār* and Muhammadiyah's *maklumat* lack the coercive force of state regulations, they still carry normative binding force because they originate in institutions socially and religiously recognized by their respective communities. These studies have provided a crucial foundation for understanding the plurality of interpretations, the formation of religious authority, and the effectiveness of Islamic norms in Indonesia.¹⁹ However, a limitation remains: systematic analysis comparing the three concrete instruments for determining the start of Ramaḍān, *ikhbār*, *maklumat*, and *ithbāt*, in terms of their sources of legitimacy, the subjects they bind, and their respective degrees of binding force, is lacking. Previous research has not sufficiently clarified the differences between the normative authority exercised by religious organizations and the legal-administrative authority exercised by the state, or how the two operate in tandem to determine the start of Ramaḍān.

This article reconceptualizes the determination of Ramaḍān in Indonesia from a dispute over methods of lunar determination into a problem of plural Islamic legal authority. It demonstrates that NU's *ikhbār*, Muhammadiyah's *maklumat*, and the state's *ithbāt* constitute three distinct normative instruments whose authority rests upon different sources of legitimacy and produces different degrees of binding force. The research's novelty lies in shifting the unit of analysis from the different methods used to determine the start of Ramaḍān

¹⁶ Hyung-Jun Kim, "Collegial Leadership and Election in Muhammadiyah: Institutional Ways to Diffuse the Religious Authority of Leaders," *Studia Islamika* 30, no. 2 (December 2023): 211–34, <https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v30i2.33741>.

¹⁷ Nasruddin Yusuf et al., "Policing Islamic Orthodoxy: Classificatory Authority and the Institutional Translation of Majelis Ulama Indonesia Fatwas," *Journal of Islamic Law* 7, no. 2 (August 2026): 399–431, <https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v7i2.5336>.

¹⁸ Mohammad Syifa Amin Widigdo and Homaidi Hamid, "The Power of Fatwā in Indonesia: An Analysis of MUI's Controversial Fatwās," *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 14, no. 2 (December 2018): 146–65, <https://doi.org/10.18196/AIIJIS.2018.0085.146-165>.

¹⁹ Zulkifli Zulkifli, "The Ulama in Indonesia: Between Religious Authority and Symbolic Power," *Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 37, no. 1 (June 2013), <https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v37i1.79>.

to a comparison of the anatomy of legal authority across three forms of institutional decisions: *ikhbār*, *maklumat*, and *ithbāt*. These are treated not merely as three announcements of a date,²⁰ but as three distinct modes of norm production, each characterized by differing sources of legitimacy, structures of authority, recipient communities, and degrees of binding force. This can be concluded by treating Ramaḍān as an empirical laboratory for examining legal pluralism²¹ and the authority of Islamic law.²² Furthermore, the research advances the analysis from a mere plurality of Islamic interpretations to a plurality of Islamic legal authorities. It positions *ikhbār*, *maklumat*, and *ithbāt* as three forms of norm production distinguished by their sources of legitimacy, subjects of applicability, and the intensity of their binding force. This perspective allows Ramaḍān to be understood as a form of polycentric Islamic legal authority, a system of Islamic legal governance not monopolized by the state or any single religious organization but shaped by the coexistence and interaction between the normative authority of religious communities and the state's legal-administrative authority. The differing bases of legitimacy in determining Ramaḍān produce significant differences in the binding authority of each decision. *Ikhbār* and *maklumat* do not derive their binding force from state legislative or administrative power; rather, compliance with them stems primarily from the normative relationship between religious organizations and their members, trust in the authority of religious scholars, and acceptance of the legal methodology employed.

²⁰ Saifuddin Herlambang et al., "Ḥusn Al-Jawāb 'an Ithbāt al-Ahillaḥ bi al-Ḥisāb: Basyūnī 'Imrān's Method for Standardising the Determination of the Qamariyah Month in the Sultanate of Sambas (1913-1976)," *Journal of Islamic Law* 5, no. 2 (August 2024): 222–41, <https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v5i2.2775>.

²¹ Achmad Zuhdi et al., "Towards an Integrated Sharia Governance Model in Indonesia: Legal Pluralism and the Reconfiguration of State Religion Relations in Financial Supervision," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 10, no. 2 (November 2025): 873–99, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v10i2.12812>; Achmad Hariri and Basuki Babussalam, "Legal Pluralism: Concept, Theoretical Dialectics, and Its Existence in Indonesia," *Walisono Law Review (Walrev)* 6, no. 2 (October 2024): 146–70, <https://doi.org/10.21580/walrev.2024.6.2.25566>; Arifki Budia Warman et al., "Mediated Legal Pluralism: Interfaith Marriage and the Reconfiguration of Legal Authority in Indonesian Online News," *Journal of Islamic Law* 7, no. 2 (August 2026): 432–64, <https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v7i2.5798>.

²² M. Ridho Ilahi et al., "Fatwa Institutions in Handling Religious Blasphemy Crimes in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Al-Ahkam* 34, no. 1 (March 2024): 33–62, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ahkam.2024.34.1.18624>; Muhamad Nasrudin et al., "From Nonbinding to Binding: Legal Authority Transformation of DSN–MUI Fatwas within the National Legal System," *Jurnal Hukum Islam* 23, no. 2 (December 2025): 413–58, <https://doi.org/10.28918/jhi.v23i2.03>; Suraji, "The Authority of Islamic Legal Fatwa: An Analytical Study of al-Qarāfi's Perspectives," *International Journal of Social Science and Religion (IJSSR)*, May 26, 2025, 107–18, <https://doi.org/10.53639/ijssr.v6i1.325>.

This article examines multiple sources of Islamic legal authority, showing that Islamic law in Indonesia operates under a polycentric model, in which normative power is distributed among multiple, coexisting centers that derive legitimacy from diverse sources. The *ikhbār* issued by NU derives legitimacy from the *fiqh* tradition, the authority of ulama, and NU's institutional framework; Muhammadiyah's *maklumat* draws legitimacy from *tarjih* methodology, collective *ijtihad*, organizational decisions, and the authority of its Central Board; meanwhile, the government's *ithbāt* gains religious legitimacy through a process of deliberation and the combined use of *hisāb* and *ru'ya*, alongside public legitimacy derived from the Ministry of Religious Affairs' administrative authority.²³ This article addresses the central question of how the bases of legitimacy and the binding force of these three mechanisms—NU's *ikhbār*, Muhammadiyah's *maklumat*, and the government's *ithbāt*—shape the configuration of Islamic legal authority in Indonesia regarding the determination of the start of Ramaḍān. This inquiry is broken down into four specific issues: the sources from which each institution derives the authority to determine the start of Ramaḍān; the parties to whom and the extent to which each decision is binding; the relationship between the normative authority of religious organizations and the legal-administrative authority of the state; and how the coexistence of these three entities shapes the governance of Islamic law within the Indonesian legal system. The research focuses on the constructs of Islamic legal authority, legal legitimacy, binding authority, and institutional competence, as well as the interplay between the production of Islamic norms by religious civil society and state decision-making processes.

This study employs a socio-legal and philosophical approach, integrating normative legal analysis with a conceptual examination of Islamic legal authority, legal legitimacy, binding force, and legal pluralism. The primary sources include legislation, institutional decisions, and official documents from NU, Muhammadiyah, and the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, including *ikhbār*, *maklumat*, conference resolutions, ministerial regulations, and *ithbāt* decisions. These documents are examined through systematic close reading,

²³ Marwadi and Mughni Labib, "The Fiqh of Hisab Rukyat of Modernist Mass Organizations: A Study of Muhammadiyah and al-Irsyad al-Islamiyah Thought on the Hijri Calendar," *International Journal of Social Science and Religion (IJSSR)*, November 10, 2025, 391–406, <https://doi.org/10.53639/ijssr.v6i3.377>; Fanani, Khoir, and Hashim, "Muhammadiyah's Uṣūl al-Fiqh in Determining the Beginning of Ramaḍān and Syawwāl Months"; Abdul Helim, "Hamka's Legal Methodology on Hisab-Ru'yah in His Book 'Saya Kembali ke Ru'yah,'" *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 23, no. 2 (July 2024): 215, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v23i2.11952>.

contextual interpretation, and cross-institutional comparison. First, each document is read within its institutional and legal context to identify its stated legal basis, purpose, and operative provisions. Second, the documents are analyzed according to four interrelated dimensions: (1) the source of authority from which each institution derives its competence to determine or announce the beginning of Ramaḍān; (2) the procedures through which decisions are formulated, deliberated, approved, and formally issued; (3) the individuals, religious communities, or administrative bodies to whom the decisions are addressed; and (4) the normative consequences arising from these decisions, particularly their binding force, scope of application, and implications for religious compliance or public administration. Third, the analysis compares how religious organizations and state institutions construct, justify, and exercise their respective authority. The study pays particular attention to the distinction between religious-normative authority, organizational obligations, and state-based legal authority, as well as the circumstances in which these forms of authority converge, overlap, or diverge. This documentary analysis is then interpreted through the theoretical lenses of legal pluralism and Islamic legal legitimacy to explain how institutional authority operates within Indonesia's plural legal order. Rather than treating the determination of the beginning of Ramaḍān merely as a technical or ritual question, this study examines it as a site of interaction and negotiation between religious organizations and state institutions. In doing so, it seeks to develop a more precise conceptual understanding of shared legal authority while recognizing the distinct legal foundations, institutional jurisdictions, and normative effects of each actor's decisions.

Nahdlatul Ulama's *Ikhbār*: Juristic Legitimacy, Binding Authority, and Conditional Compliance with State *Ithbāt*

In NU's thinking, the determination of the beginning of qamariah months, such as Ramaḍān, Shawwāl, and Dhūlḥijja, is based on the *ru'ya* system and supported by *ḥisāb taḥqīqī*, using the criterion of *imkān al-ru'ya* (possibility of visibility).²⁴ NU's authority to determine the start of Ramaḍān derives from a jurisprudential tradition that grounds the beginning of the lunar month in *ru'ya al-hilāl* (sighting the new moon) and *istikmāl* (completing the lunar month to 30

²⁴ Ghazali Masroeri, *Pedoman Hisab dan Rukyat Nahdlatul Ulama* (Jakarta: Lajnah Falakiyah Pengurus Besar Nahdlatu Ulama, 2006).

days). This legitimacy was institutionally reinforced through Munas Alim Ulama in Situbondo (1983), the 27th NU Congress (1984), and the National Conference of Religious Scholars in Cilacap (1987).²⁵ The 1987 conference decision affirmed that a determination of the month's start made by a judge or the government (*ithbāt al-'āmm*) carries religious authority that must be followed if based on *ru'ya* or completion (*istikmāl*); conversely, a decision relying solely on astronomical calculations does not automatically create an obligation of compliance for NU members.²⁶ This development indicates that NU's legal legitimacy is constructed not merely by reproducing classical jurisprudential doctrine, but also by institutionalizing astronomical knowledge within religious decision-making. Thus, NU's official announcement (*ikhbār*) expresses Islamic legal authority by integrating jurisprudential legitimacy, scientific considerations, and institutional mechanisms to determine the start of Ramaḍān.

The normative status of NU's *ikhbār* differs from the government's public authority to determine the start of Ramaḍān through the *ithbāt* session.²⁷ NU's *ikhbār* is a religious notification grounded in the collective authority of ulama and directed primarily at the organization's structure and its members. Its binding force derives not from the state's coercive power, but rather from the scholarly legitimacy of the ulama, the acceptance of *fiqh* arguments, and the members' recognition of the organization's religious authority. Compliance with the state depends not only on the government's formal status as the holder of public authority, but also on whether its determination procedures align with *fiqh* principles recognized by NU. NU's religious authority is not always uniform, as differences persist in how the organization interprets and applies criteria for sighting the new moon (*hila*) across its levels.²⁸ Thus, the binding nature of the *ikhbār* is best understood as a normative-religious obligation grounded in *fiqh* legitimacy and organizational compliance, rather than a state legal mandate coercively applicable to all Muslims in Indonesia.

²⁵ Miftahul Ulum, "Fatwa Ulama NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) dan Muhammadiyah Jawa Timur tentang Hisab Rukyat," *Syaikhuna: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pranata Islam* 6, no. 2 (July 2015): 1–37, <https://doi.org/10.58223/syaikhuna.v6i2.171>.

²⁶ Masroeri, *Pedoman Hisab dan Rukyat Nahdlatul Ulama*.

²⁷ Marwadi Marwadi, "Renewing the Thoughts of the Hijri Calendar of Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama and Persatuan Islam and Its Implications for Realization of National Hijri Calendar," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 15, no. 1 (June 2021): 19–36, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v15i1.4870>.

²⁸ Ulum, "Fatwa Ulama NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) dan Muhammadiyah Jawa Timur tentang Hisab Rukyat."

In relation to the official determination, NU acknowledges that the determination of the beginning of the lunar month that applies to all levels of Indonesian Muslim society is the determination made by the Indonesian government. If the government refuses to perform *ithbāt* based on *ru'ya*, then the results of *ru'ya* carried out by the community, especially NU members, become the authority for NU to issue an official *ikhbār* to all Muslim society through organizational networks and official information channels. *Ikbār* has two functions: justification and correction. It serves to justify government decisions if they align with the NU's determination of the beginning of the lunar month. However, *ikhbār* serves as a corrective measure if the government's decision does not align with NU's own decisions.

Ikbār provides internal guidance to NU members to perform Ramaḍān worship in accordance with the results of the *ru'ya*. Internally, the NU *ikhbār* is an institutional guideline that imposes a moral and social obligation on NU members to follow in their worship practices, ensuring they worship in accordance with determinations from the scientific and *fiqh* authorities within their organization.²⁹ In other words, *ikhbār* is issued by NU as the organizational authority, and carries a cultural and institutional binding element for all NU members. However, *ikhbār* is not binding on non-NU members. Thus, the religious authority of the NU *ikhbār* in determining the beginning of the lunar month is more a matter of non-coercive obedience with non-formal legal effect outside NU. The findings of this study indicate that the NU *ikhbār* does not replace the legal status of the government's *ithbāt*, as *ikhbār* is not a nationally binding legal instrument for all Indonesian Muslims but rather an instrument for fostering internal worship within NU.

As the largest religious organization in Indonesia, NU serves as a normative authority for Indonesian Muslims, establishing religious norms and legitimizing worship practices. Regarding the determination of the beginning of the lunar month, NU acts as a religious authority by issuing *ikhbār*, which holds cultural and organizational power for NU members, and *ikhbār* is based on non-coercive obedience.³⁰ This research finding indicates that NU does not monopolize religious authority but rather shares it with other major Islamic organizations,

²⁹ Afifah Mulya Alamsyah and Muhammad Ihtirozun Ni'am, "Dinamika Penentuan Awal Bulan Kamariah Nahdatul Ulama: Sebelum dan Sesudah Adanya Formulasi Kriteria Imkan Rukyat," *Astroislamica: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* 4, no. 1 (June 2025): 62–78, <https://doi.org/10.47766/astroislamica.v4i1.5241>.

³⁰ Masroeri, *Pedoman Hisab Dan Rukyat Nahdlatul Ulama*.

while asserting itself as a strategic partner of the state and relying on the social legitimacy of government decisions regarding *ithbāt*. Furthermore, NU exists within a sphere of shared religious authority negotiated between the state and Islamic civil society.

The relationship between NU's *ikhbār* and the government's *ithbāt* reflects conditional compliance, in which recognition of state authority remains contingent on fulfilling *fiqh* legitimacy when determining the start of Ramaḍān. These facts show that bureaucratizing *ḥisāb-ru'ya* did not fully shift authority over the start of Ramaḍān from religious organizations to the state; instead, it created a configuration of authority with multiple centers of legitimacy within Islamic law. Within this configuration, NU maintains the independence of its *fiqh* reasoning while simultaneously acknowledging the government's coordinating role through the *ithbāt* process. Consequently, NU's conditional compliance reflects polycentric Islamic legal authority. This arrangement allows state authority and religious organizations to interact, negotiate, and align their decisions without erasing the distinct sources of legitimacy and normative binding force inherent in each. Furthermore, *ikhbār* can serve as a scientific and epistemological critique of decisions by other social organizations that determine the beginning of the month, either without a strong basis in *ru'ya* or solely on *ḥisāb* (astronomical calculations). In this context, *ikhbār* serves as a counter-argumentative narrative to other opinions, as NU acts as both a partner and a counterbalance to the state in producing the national Islamic calendar. The initial findings of this study indicate that NU, in determining the beginning of the month of Ramaḍān in Indonesia, serves as a religious authority within civil society based on tradition and knowledge, rather than state power, because the *ikhbār* it issues has only internal social binding power.

Muhammadiyah's *Maklumat*: Juristic Legitimacy, Institutional Binding Authority, and Organizational Compliance

Muhammadiyah previously determined the beginning of lunar months, including Ramaḍān, using the *ḥisāb ḥaqīqī wujūd al-hilāl* method.³¹ Astronomical calculation enabled these determinations to be announced well

³¹ Marwadi, "Renewing the Thoughts of the Hijri Calendar of Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama and Persatuan Islam and Its Implications for Realization of National Hijri Calendar"; Musonnif, "In Search of the Moon."

before the government's *ithbāt* session.³² Muhammadiyah subsequently adopted the Unified Global Hijri Calendar (KHGT), replacing its previous *wujūd al-hilāl* criterion. This transition, decided at the 32nd National Tarjih Conference in Pekalongan in 2024, retained astronomical calculation while introducing a global calendrical framework.³³ Muhammadiyah communicates its determinations through the Central Board's official *maklumat*, providing advance guidance for worship and related social activities. The development of its calendrical approach reflects the continuing interaction between scientific reasoning, religious interpretation, and the modernization of worship practices.³⁴ The authority of these announcements must therefore be examined through both their methodological foundations and the institutional processes through which they become organizational guidelines.

Muhammadiyah's *maklumat* reflects the institutional relationship between astronomical reasoning, religious interpretation, and organizational guidance in determining the beginning of lunar months.³⁵ The normative legitimacy of Muhammadiyah's official announcements on the start of Ramaḍān rests on the institutionalization of *ijtihād jamā'ī* through the Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid. This body possesses the epistemic authority to formulate Islamic legal views based on the Qur'an, hadith, and structured religious reasoning. Within Muhammadiyah, the concept of *tarjih* has evolved from merely selecting the strongest *fiqh* opinion into a more comprehensive system of *ijtihād*.³⁶ This evolution is marked by the development of the *tarjih* methodology, which synthesizes textual, rational, and spiritual approaches to shape

³² H. Rohmat, "Penentuan Awal Bulan Qamariyah Menurut Muhammadiyah," *Ijtima'iyya: Jurnal Pengembangan Masyarakat Islam* 7, no. 1 (February 2014): 127–48, <https://doi.org/10.24042/ijpmi.v7i1.921>.

³³ Anisah Budiwati et al., "Indonesian Muslims' Intention to Adopt the Global Islamic Calendar," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 13, no. 1 (February 2026): 2625583, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2026.2625583>.

³⁴ Marataon Ritonga et al., "Transformasi Hisab-Rukyat dalam Penentuan Awal Bulan Hijriah di Muhammadiyah," *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Agama dan Ilmu Pengetahuan* 21, no. 1 (May 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).

³⁵ Nailur Rahmi et al., "Contestation of the Determination of 'Idul Adha and Its Implementation According to Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul 'Ulama," *Nurani: Jurnal Kajian Syari'ah dan Masyarakat* 25, no. 1 (June 2025): 262–79, <https://doi.org/10.19109/nurani.v25i1.26563>.

³⁶ Syamsul Anwar, "Fatwā, Purification and Dynamization: A Study of Tarjih in Muhammadiyah," *Islamic Law and Society* 12, no. 1 (January 2005): 27–44, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1568519053123894>.

Muhammadiyah's Islamic legal thought.³⁷ This framework shows that the authority of such announcements derives not solely from astronomical capabilities to predict the new moon's appearance, but from a process that turns religious arguments into institutional decisions that gain legitimacy through deliberation and organizational ratification. Normatively, a distinction exists between the findings or fatwas of the Majelis Tarjih and the religious rulings formally ratified by the Muhammadiyah Central Board.³⁸ An official 2021 statement by Muhammadiyah clarified that a *tarjih* ruling constitutes an official organizational decision on religious matters with formal binding force, distinguishing it from fatwas or *tarjih* discourses that have not yet attained such status. This mechanism is evident in the shift in guidelines for determining the start of the lunar month toward the Unified Global Hijri Calendar (KHGT), a move decided at the 32nd National Tarjih Conference in Pekalongan in 2024 and ratified by Muhammadiyah Central Board Decree Number 86/KEP/I.O/B/2025. Based on that decision, the Muhammadiyah Central Board issued *Maklumat* Number 2/MLM/I.O/E/2025 determining Ramaḍān, Shawwāl, and Dhūlhijja 1447 H. This sequence illustrates a multi-stage institutionalization process in which jurisprudential arguments and astronomical expertise, legitimized through collective *ijtihad*, were subsequently transformed into official guidelines and finally communicated to the organization's members. The findings of this study indicate that the *maklumat* derives its authority from two sources: substantive legitimacy rooted in the *ijtihad* methodology and procedural legitimacy stemming from Muhammadiyah's institutional authority.

The binding force of Muhammadiyah's *maklumat* arises from the interplay between the scholarly authority of the Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid, the mandate of the Muhammadiyah Central Board, and the members' recognition of the organization's official decisions. This relationship positions the pronouncement as a guide for religious conduct; it derives normative strength not from state-imposed coercion, but from institutional structures, organizational consensus, and acceptance of the outcomes of collective *ijtihad*. This binding force primarily applies to the organization's leadership and administrative bodies in the execution of their duties. In contrast, for individual members, it operates through their commitment to membership, acceptance of the *tarjih* councils'

³⁷ Ahwan Fanani et al., "Muhammadiyah's Manhaj Tarjih: An Evolution of a Modernist Approach to Islamic Jurisprudence in Indonesia," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (October 2021): 4, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6942>.

³⁸ Anwar, "Fatwā, Purification and Dynamization."

authority, and adherence to the organization's established worship guidelines. The organizational structure and members' acceptance of the Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid as an authority on religious law shape compliance among Muhammadiyah members.³⁹ The validity of Muhammadiyah's religious rulings extends beyond formal ratification; it also hinges on community acceptance and implementation. Consequently, compliance with these pronouncements can be categorized as institutionally mediated religious compliance, facilitated by the legitimacy of *fiqh* and organizational structures. It cannot be equated with public legal obligations enforceable upon all Muslims in Indonesia.

Therefore, in the context of Muhammadiyah, the officially issued *maklumat* serves as a symbolic affirmation of the identity of a religious organization that uses a modernized approach to astronomy and *ru'ya* technology, while simultaneously shifting scientific authority from traditional ulama to scientific-institutional authority.⁴⁰ The status of Muhammadiyah's *maklumat* relative to the government's *ithbāt* decision shows that the determination of the start of Ramaḍān in Indonesia operates within a configuration of Islamic legal authority that is not entirely centralized under the state. This distinction reflects differences in sources of legitimacy, the scope of a decision's applicability, and the institutional mechanisms determining when a specific *ijtihad* outcome acquires normative authority. Within Muhammadiyah's framework, a determination made via *maklumat* carries internal binding force, as it implements a *tarjih* (legal deliberation) decision that has received organizational ratification; conversely, the government's *ithbāt* derives its authority from the state's mandate to coordinate the determination of the start of the month at the national level. Muhammadiyah's independent legal reasoning is an institutional characteristic rooted in the tradition of Islamic legal reform.⁴¹ The findings of this study indicate that the *maklumat* functions as a form of institutional Islamic legal authority that remains operative even when its religious ruling differs from the state's *ithbāt*. These divergent decisions show that state coordination does not automatically negate the normative authority

³⁹ Fuady Abdullah, Novi Fitia Maliha, and Ima Frafika Sari, "The Authority of the Fatwa of the Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid on Fajr Time in Ponorogo East Java: Between Scholarly Authority and Organizational Compliance," *Asy-Syir'ah: Jurnal Ilmu Syari'ah dan Hukum* 58, no. 1 (June 2024): 87–118, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajish.v58i1.1399>.

⁴⁰ Amirah Himayah Husna, "Unifikasi Kalender Hijriah Nasional Menurut Perspektif Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama," *Al-Afaq: Jurnal Ilmu Falak dan Astronomi* 4, no. 1 (June 2022): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.20414/afaq.v4i1.4169>.

⁴¹ Anwar, "Fatwā, Purification and Dynamization"; Fanani et al., "Muhammadiyah's Manhaj Tarjih."

of religious organizations. Thus, the bureaucratization of *ḥisāb-ru'ya* in Indonesia shapes a polycentric pattern of Islamic legal authority, a configuration comprising multiple centers of authority with distinct mechanisms of legitimacy, subjects of compliance, and scopes of applicability, yet which continue to interact in regulating the community's religious life.

State *Itḥbāt*: Legal-Administrative Legitimacy, Public Binding Authority, and Institutional Coordination

The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, determines the beginning of Ramaḍān based on the *ru'ya al-hilāl* or *ḥisāb*. Since 1972, the government has established the *Ḥisāb* and *Ru'ya* Agency under the Directorate General of Islamic Community Guidance. The Ministry of Religious Affairs uses an integrative approach between *ru'ya* and *ḥisāb* to determine the beginning of Ramaḍān.⁴² The *itḥbāt* (determination) session is an official forum that brings together various parties, such as Ulama, astronomers, and Islamic organizations, to determine when Ramaḍān begins.⁴³ The mechanism for determining the beginning of *Ramaḍān* is stipulated in the Minister of Religious Affairs Decree No. 432 of 2022, which sets out guidelines for the implementation of *ru'ya al-hilāl* and *ḥisāb* as a method for determining the beginning of the Hijri month, including Ramaḍān. Most recently, the government has issued Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation number 1 of 2026 concerning the implementation of the *itḥbāt* hearing. This regulation sets out the methodology for determining the beginning of the Hijri month by integrating *ḥisāb* and *ru'ya al-hilāl*, *imkān al-ru'ya*, and the procedures for the *itḥbāt* hearing to determine the beginning of Ramaḍān, Shawwāl, and Dhūlhijja. The national-level *iḥtibāt* session determines the beginning of Ramaḍān after considering *ru'ya* results from across Indonesia.⁴⁴

The state's *itḥbāt* legitimacy in determining the start of Ramaḍān in Indonesia rests on the convergence of the government's legal-administrative authority and the normative recognition within *fiqh* of the ruler's role in

⁴² M. Nur Hidayat, "Otoritas Pemerintah dalam Penetapan Awal Bulan Qamariyah Perspektif Fiqh Siyāsah Yusuf Qardhawi," *Jurisdicție: Jurnal Hukum dan Syariah*, no. 0 (November 2012), <https://doi.org/10.18860/j.v0i0.2177>.

⁴³ Majid, "Maqasid al-Syar'ah Analysis of Dualism of Authority in Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Month."

⁴⁴ Diana Sari and Destri Natalia, "Metode Penetapan Awal Ramadhan Menurut Kementerian Agama di Kota Lubuklinggau," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 1, no. 1 (December 2024): 34–40.

regulating the community's religious affairs. The *ithbāt* authority has two interconnected yet distinct layers of legitimacy: legal-administrative legitimacy derived from the attribution of governmental authority, and normative-religious legitimacy grounded in the principle of public interest and the recognition of the ruler's decision within *fiqh*.⁴⁵ Based on this relationship, the study finds that the bureaucratization of *ḥisāb-ru'ya* has transformed the authority to determine the start of Ramaḍān into a governmental practice institutionalized through administrative procedures, without entirely severing its reliance on Islamic legal argumentation and acceptance. In this case, the state does not use religious authority to strengthen its ideological basis but rather performs political and administrative functions.⁴⁶ The determination of the beginning of the lunar month through a government-organized *ithbāt* session demonstrates deliberative religious authority in the Indonesian context. Therefore, the state, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, exercises rational-legal authority.⁴⁷ The *ithbāt* session becomes a space where this form of state authority interacts and is negotiated. Thus, determining the beginning of the lunar month is a social-legitimacy practice that reflects power relations in a democratic Muslim society.

The binding force of the government's *ithbāt* decision varies across administrative law, religious obligation, and social compliance. As a decision made through a governmental mechanism, the *ithbāt* provides an official ruling on the start of Ramaḍān and serves as a reference point for implementing policies, services, and public administrative activities.⁴⁸ However, the existence of state administrative authority does not automatically mean that every citizen is legally obligated to observe the dates of worship set by the government.⁴⁹ The

⁴⁵ Siti Tatmainul Qulub and Ahmad Munif, "Urgensi Fatwa dan Sidang Isbat dalam Penentuan Awal Bulan Kamariah di Indonesia," *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 16, no. 2 (December 2023): 423–52, <https://doi.org/10.37302/jbi.v16i2.929>.

⁴⁶ Sally Engle Merry, "Legal Pluralism," *Law & Society Review* 22, no. 5 (January 1988): 869–96, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3053638>.

⁴⁷ John Griffiths, "What Is Legal Pluralism?," *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law* 18, no. 24 (January 1986): 1–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07329113.1986.10756387>.

⁴⁸ Ahmad Musonnif et al., "Government Position in Religious Authority Contestation in Indonesia: Reviewing the Government Authority in Determining the Beginning of Islamic Months," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum dan Syar'iah* 16, no. 2 (December 2024): 336–62, <https://doi.org/10.18860/j-fsh.v16i2.27517>.

⁴⁹ Ahmad Adib Rofiuddin, Mahsun Mahsun, and Arifana Nur Kholiq, "State Authority and Religious Contestation: Resistance to Governmental Decisions on Islamic Calendar Determination in Indonesia," *Fikri: Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial dan Budaya* 10, no. 1 (July 2025): 250–63, <https://doi.org/10.25217/jf.v10i1.5159>.

findings of this research show that the *ithbāt* authority can garner broad religious recognition without necessarily resulting in uniform compliance. This shows that the state's determination serves a coordinative function and exercises public authority. Yet, it does not automatically nullify religious decisions organizations make for their own members. Thus, this study identifies the public binding authority inherent in the *ithbāt* as an authority with administrative consequences within the scope of state jurisdiction. In contrast, its binding force over individual acts of worship remains contingent on *fiqh* legitimacy, religious recognition, and public acceptance. The government-organized *ithbāt* session is a deliberative arena that brings together various parties, with the state acting as a mediator. However, *ithbāt* decisions also have a symbolic dimension, demonstrating the state's presence in religious affairs and helping maintain social stability. In practice, modern bureaucratic states, including Indonesia, exercise legal-rational authority as the basis for political-religious legitimacy.⁵⁰

Negotiating Islamic Legal Authority: Legal Pluralism, Institutional Contestation, and Religious Legal Governance

Differences in methods and interpretations of religious texts have led to varying approaches to determining the beginning of the lunar month, particularly among community organizations in Indonesia.⁵¹ However, these differences in methods, including *ru'ya*, *hisāb wujūd al-hilāl*, and *ithbāt*, have not led to prolonged conflict but rather represent three models of authority: traditional-charismatic authority, rational-instrumental authority, and legal-bureaucratic authority.⁵² This fragmentation demonstrates that in a democratic context, this contestation is not merely a conflict but also a mechanism of checks

⁵⁰ Carmela Gulluscio, "Legitimacy Theory," in *Encyclopedia of Sustainable Management* (Springer, Cham, 2023), 2209–15, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25984-5_175.

⁵¹ Amellia Anggraini, Madian Fitri Salma, and Wirawan Jamhuri, "The Government's Role in Dealing with Conflict Dynamics, Differences in Determining the Beginning of the Hijriah Month in Indonesia," *Heritage* 5, no. 2 (December 2024): 96–102, <https://doi.org/10.35719/hrtg.v5i2.128>.

⁵² Julian Millie and Banu Senay, "Islamic Bureaucracies: New Frontiers for Public Religion," *Religion, State and Society* 53, no. 3 (May 2025): 153–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2025.2560682>; Banu Senay et al., "Islamic Bureaucracies in Indonesia and Turkey: The Challenge of Comparison," *Religion, State and Society* 53, no. 3 (May 2025): 165–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2025.2561361>.

and balances in religious governance.⁵³ Furthermore, determining the start of Ramaḍān reveals a configuration of Islamic legal pluralism shaped by the coexistence, negotiation, and demarcation of authority among the state, NU, and Muhammadiyah, each institution with distinct sources of legitimacy and religious decision-making mechanisms. From a legal pluralism perspective, Griffiths argues that legal life cannot be reduced to a single normative system controlled entirely by the state,⁵⁴ while Merry shows that various normative orders can interact, influence one another, and remain operative within the same social space.⁵⁵ These perspectives provide a basis for understanding that the government's *ithbāt*, NU's *ikhbār*, and Muhammadiyah's *maklumat* represent more than just differing astronomical methods; they reflect the existence of Islamic centers of legal authority with distinct constructions of legitimacy. These differences indicate that the authority to determine the timing of acts of worship is not identical to the state's authority to set official dates for the public interest. However, an analysis through the lenses of Griffiths and Merry reveals that these methodological differences reflect a more fundamental issue: the distribution of normative authority among institutions with different bases of legitimacy. Thus, this study identifies the negotiation of Islamic legal authority as a process of defining a ruling's scope of applicability, acknowledging other institutions' legitimacy, and establishing the relationship between religious obligations and the state's administrative authority.

The contestation among the state, NU, and Muhammadiyah over the start of Ramaḍān is a rivalry over legitimacy and a negotiation over the binding force of religious rulings, rather than merely a conflict of institutional politics. The political dimension manifests primarily in issues of representation, the authority to speak on behalf of the *umma*, and the institutions' capacity to formulate religious guidelines that are accepted by the public. Interestingly, this study found that political competition over the determination of the beginning of Ramaḍān among NU, Muhammadiyah, and the state, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has been ongoing since 1985. This long history shows that political contestation arises from the interaction of theological, epistemological, sociological, and structural-political factors in the democratic public sphere. This

⁵³ Ahmad Mushonnif, "Fragmentasi Otoritas Antar Organisasi Pemerintah dan Organisasi Keagamaan dalam Penentuan Awal Bulan Islam," *Al-Hukama': The Indonesian Journal of Islamic Family Law* 3, no. 2 (December 2013): 165–79, <https://doi.org/10.15642/al-hukama.2013.3.2.165-179>.

⁵⁴ Griffiths, "What Is Legal Pluralism?"

⁵⁵ Merry, "Legal Pluralism."

difference is not merely technical, but concerns who has the right to interpret texts and determine collective prayer times. From Max Weber's perspective, this reflects the intersection of traditional, rational, and legal-bureaucratic authority.⁵⁶ The following table illustrates among NU, Muhammadiyah, and the Indonesian government in determining Islamic religious dates between 1985 to 2012.⁵⁷

Table 1

Differences in the determination of Islamic Religious Dates in Indonesia, 1985 to 2012

The beginning of Ramaḍān in the Year	NU	Muhammadiyah	The Ministry of Religious Affairs
1985	Wednesday, June 19, 1985	Thursday, June 20, 1985	Thursday, June 20, 1985
1992	Saturday, April 4, 1992	Sunday, April 5, 1992	Sunday, April 5, 1992
1993	Wednesday, March 24, 1993	Thursday, March 25, 1993	Thursday, March 25, 1993
1994	Sunday, March 13, 1994	Monday, March 14, 1994	Monday, March 14, 1994
1998	Friday, January 30, 1998	Thursday, January 29, 1998	Friday, January 30, 1998
2000	Friday, March 17, 2000	Thursday, March 16, 2000	Thursday, March 16, 2000
2001	Saturday, November 17, 2001	Friday, November 16, 2001	Saturday, November 17, 2001
2002	Friday, December 6, 2002	Thursday, December 5, 2002	Friday, December 6, 2002
2003	Wednesday, February 12, 2003	Tuesday, February 11, 2003	Wednesday, February 12, 2003
2011	Wednesday, August 31, 2011	Tuesday, August 30, 2011	Wednesday, August 31, 2011
2012	Saturday, July 21, 2012	Friday, July 20, 2012	Saturday, July 21, 2012

Source: Authors' processed data (2026)

⁵⁶ Sharad Kumar, "Max Weber: Themes and Perspectives," *The Oriental Anthropologist* 5, no. 1 (January 2005): 86–103, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0976343020050110>.

⁵⁷ Susiknan Azhari, *Kalender Islam: Ke Arah Integrasi Muhammadiyah-NU* (Museum Astronomi Islam, 2012), Yogyakarta, [//library.walisongo.ac.id/slims/index.php?p=show_detail&id=22787](http://library.walisongo.ac.id/slims/index.php?p=show_detail&id=22787).

The differences in determining Islamic religious dates in Indonesia, as reflected in the table above, indicate that these determinations concern not only astronomy and Islamic jurisprudence but also competing claims to religious authority. In the context of a democratic state like Indonesia, religious authority is not monopolized by the state but is diffused among Islamic civil society organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah, and is also exercised through the state via the Ministry of Religious Affairs.⁵⁸ The fragmented nature of determining the beginning of Ramaḍān in Indonesia, encompassing different *ijtihād* and religious methods, demonstrates that religious authority is plural and distributed.⁵⁹ The competition within the construct of religious authority is more symbolic and epistemic than outright political conflict. Thus, differences in the beginning of Ramaḍān are not simply a matter of the crescent moon but rather a reflection of the dynamic relationship among religion, civil society, and the state within a democratic system. Furthermore, Indonesian democracy allows for the coexistence of traditional, modernist, and state authorities.

More explicitly, the determination of the beginning of Ramaḍān in Indonesia demonstrates the existence of religious governance. This concept explains how religion is managed in the public sphere through interactions between the state, religious authorities, and civil society.⁶⁰ Within this framework, the state is not the sole actor determining religious truth; rather, it negotiates with religious actors for social legitimacy. As a result, these religious actors are NU, Muhammadiyah, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, which together form a collaborative and competitive religious governance system in an equal relationship, reflecting the design of Indonesia's religious democracy. This study argues that the concept of negotiated polycentric religious legal governance for determining the start of Ramaḍān in Indonesia demonstrates that the bureaucratization of *ḥisāb-ru'ya* results in state administrative coordination operating alongside the normative autonomy of religious organizations. Within this configuration, the political dimension operates through the distribution of influence, the contest for recognition, and

⁵⁸ Hefni, "Ideological Political Contestation in the Discourse of Hisab Rukyat in Indonesia."

⁵⁹ Mushonnif, "Fragmentasi Otoritas Antar Organisasi Pemerintah dan Organisasi Keagamaan dalam Penentuan Awal Bulan Islam."

⁶⁰ Jens Köhrsen, "How Religious Is the Public Sphere? A Critical Stance on the Debate about Public Religion and Post-Secularity," *Acta Sociologica* 55, no. 3 (September 2012): 273–88, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699312445809>.

the establishment of public legitimacy,⁶¹ while the core substance remains centered on the sources of authority, the binding nature, and the applicability of Islamic legal rulings.

Thus, this study explains that determining the beginning of the lunar months, specifically Ramaḍān, illustrates Indonesia's religious governance, reflecting a hybrid model in which the state is present but not absolute. As Jürgen Habermas explains, religion remains present in the modern public sphere through a process of rational deliberation.⁶² This is reflected in the determination of Ramaḍān, which serves as a symbolic deliberation between the state and Islamic civil society. Furthermore, the negotiated religious authority system model that governs the beginning of Ramaḍān explains that social stability is maintained through a balance among traditional, rational, and legal-bureaucratic authority. Variations from year to year indicate that social stability is achieved through negotiations over religious authority within a collaborative governance framework, rather than by the dominance of a single actor.

Institutionalizing *Ḥisāb-Ru'ya* through State Law: Legal Standardization, Limits of Authority, and *Ijtihād* Pluralism

The institutionalization of *ḥisāb-ru'ya* through state law marks a transformation in how the start of Ramaḍān is determined: shifting from a practice of *fiqh* reasoning exercised by religious authorities to an administrative mechanism grounded in authority, substantive standards, decision-making procedures, and institutional accountability. However, administrative standardization is not synonymous with codifying the entire body of *fiqh* doctrine on the start of Ramaḍān, as the regulations govern only the methods and procedures used within the state's *ithbāt* mechanism. Thus, this study identifies legal institutionalization as the process of transforming *fiqh* and astronomical knowledge into administrative decision standards with positive legal legitimacy, without automatically making those standards the sole valid interpretation of Islamic law for all religious organizations. Furthermore, these

⁶¹ Elinor Ostrom, "Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems," *American Economic Review* 100, no. 3 (June 2010): 641–72, <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.100.3.641>.

⁶² Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Derrida, and Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (University of Chicago Press, 2003).

differences in determination are not merely matters of *ḥisāb* and *ru'ya* methods but have become part of religious governance in a modern democratic state such as Indonesia.

The primary legal issue in institutionalizing *ḥisāb-ru'ya* concerns the boundary between the government's authority to standardize procedures for determining the start of Ramaḍān and religious organizations' normative authority to uphold differing *ijtihād* outcomes.⁶³ From a state administrative law perspective, the principle of legality requires that every government action be grounded in legitimate authority; furthermore, the scope of a decision's applicability must be distinguished from claims of religious obligation rooted in *fiqh* doctrine. Normatively, this distinction is crucial when viewed in light of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Fatwa Number 2 of 2004, which stipulates that government determinations regarding the start of Ramaḍān, Shawwāl, and Dhūlḥijja apply nationwide and are binding on Muslims, citing the doctrine of *ḥukm al-ḥākim ilzām wa yarfa' al-khilāf*, whereby a ruler's decision holds binding force and resolves disputes within their jurisdiction.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, such a fatwa cannot be equated with statutory legislation, as their bases of legitimacy, normative standing, and enforcement mechanisms differ.⁶⁵ This issue can be further analyzed by distinguishing among legal validity, juristic legitimacy, and religious compliance, which refer, respectively, to the validity of an administrative act under positive law, the legitimacy of a decision based on *fiqh* reasoning, and the acceptance of that decision within the community's religious practice.⁶⁶ Within the framework of legal pluralism, multiple normative orders show that state authority does not invariably extinguish the binding force of norms generated by non-state institutions.⁶⁷ Consequently, this

⁶³ Sutrisno Sutrisno et al., "Religious Authority and Cultural Governance in Islamic Public Law: A Fiqh Siyasah Study of Music Concert Regulation in Aceh," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum dan Pemikiran* 25, no. 2 (December 2025): 324–44, <https://doi.org/10.18592/sjhp.v25i2.19925>.

⁶⁴ Qulub and Munif, "Urgensi Fatwa dan Sidang Isbat dalam Penentuan Awal Bulan Kamariah di Indonesia."

⁶⁵ Abdul Rachman et al., "From Fatwa to Market: The Legitimacy of Religious Authority and Selective Compliance in the Boycott of Israel-Linked Products in Indonesia," *Journal of Islamic Law* 7, no. 2 (August 2026): 494–523, <https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v7i2.5019>.

⁶⁶ Sandya Mahendra and Muhammad Junaidi, "The Position of the Indonesian Council of Ulama in The Indonesian State Governmental Legal System: The Perspective of Abū Ḥasan al-Māwardī," *Al-Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syari'ah dan Hukum* 8, no. 1 (June 2023): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.22515/alahkam.v8i1.6428>.

⁶⁷ Arskal Salim, *Contemporary Islamic Law in Indonesia: Sharia and Legal Pluralism* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt14brz2b>.

study finds that the standardization of *ithbāt* establishes legitimate administrative authority to issue government determinations; however, its applicability to individual and organizational choices regarding *ijtihād* cannot be assumed to have universal coercive force. The legal issue at stake is not merely whether the government has the authority to determine the start of Ramaḍān, but whether the administrative legitimacy of such a determination can extend to create a normative-religious obligation that precludes divergent *ijtihād* without a clear legal basis.

The consequences of institutionalizing *ḥisāb* and *ru'ya* for the plurality of *ijtihād* are evident in the persistent divergence in decisions on determining Ramaḍān, even as the state has established more institutionalized administrative standards and procedures. This situation reflects legal pluralism, in which normative orders from both the state and religious organizations operate concurrently, despite differing bases of legitimacy and scopes of applicability.⁶⁸ In this context, the state's role is best viewed as a coordinator of religious legal matters rather than a holder of a monopoly on *fiqh*. Consequently, administrative legal certainty and the continued plurality of *ijtihād* are not necessarily mutually exclusive objectives.

Religious governance in the institutionalization of *fiqh ḥisāb ru'ya* demonstrates that *fiqh* no longer exists within the closed sphere of schools of thought. Still, it operates within a public governance system that positions religion as a tool of governance in the modern state. This study underscores that public religion should serve as the foundation for negotiating religious authority in a democratic public sphere. The article's primary conceptual contribution is the notion of bounded legal standardization within polycentric Islamic legal authority. This concept posits that while the state can regulate and standardize how it determines the start of Ramaḍān within its administrative jurisdiction; such standardization does not automatically make the state the sole authority on all interpretations of Islamic law. In other words, institutionalizing the *ḥisāb-ru'ya* method through state law creates a binding administrative standard for the government's determination of the start of Ramaḍān without negating the *ijtihād* autonomy of non-state religious organizations. The resulting legal order demonstrates a form of bounded standardization operating within a polycentric

⁶⁸ Arief Fahmi Lubis, "Legal Pluralism and Social Identity: An Analysis of State and Religious Law Interaction in Local Dispute Resolution in Indonesia and Pakistan," *Lex Localis - Journal of Local Self-Government* 23, no. 11 (October 2025): 1910–21, <https://doi.org/10.52152/bt4pv061>.

structure of Islamic legal authority. Furthermore, while bureaucratizing the determination of the start of Ramaḍān in Indonesia introduces legal-administrative standardization, it does not automatically centralize all normative Islamic legal authority within the state.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates the legal authority underpinning three forms of institutional decisions, *ikhbār*, *maklumat*, and *ithbāt*, that determine the beginning of Ramaḍān in Indonesia. These are not merely three different announcements regarding the date; rather, they represent three distinct modes of norm production, each characterized by unique sources of legitimacy, authority structures, recipient communities, and degrees of binding force. The research highlights the plurality of Islamic legal authorities by analyzing *ikhbār*, *maklumat*, and *ithbāt* as distinct forms of norm production, thereby demonstrating that Islamic law in Indonesia operates through a model of polycentric legal authority, a system involving the distribution of normative authority among multiple, coexisting centers of authority that derive legitimacy from diverse sources. This polycentric nature of legal authority in determining the start of Ramaḍān shows that neither the state nor any single religious organization monopolizes the governance of Islamic law; instead, it is shaped by the coexistence and interaction of normative authority held by religious communities and the state's legal-administrative authority. Neither *ikhbār* nor *maklumat* derives its binding force from state legislative or administrative power. Compliance with these decisions stems primarily from normative relationships between religious organizations and their members or epistemic communities, trust in the authority of religious scholars, and acceptance of the legal methodologies employed.

This research argues that Islamic law's pluralism in Indonesia arises not only from diverse *fiqh* interpretations but also from multiple institutions with legitimate claims to translate Sharia norms into operational decisions. This plurality shapes a layered model of Islamic legal governance: organizational religious authority fosters normative-communal compliance, while the state ensures legal-administrative certainty, and both can coexist without merging into a single, unified authority. Ultimately, this study encourages further research and invites comparative inquiries into how the dynamics of Islamic jurisprudence in madhhab discourse enter national governance. Therefore,

Islamic jurisprudence no longer exists within a limited community space but rather within the national social system. At this point, this article recommends institutionalizing *ḥisāb-ru'ya* through state law as a transformation in how the start of Ramaḍān is determined: shifting from a *fiqh*-based reasoning practice exercised by religious authorities to an administrative mechanism grounded in authority, substantive standards, decision-making procedures, and institutional accountability without negating the *ijtihād* autonomy of non-state religious organizations. Despite the study's limited geographical scope in Indonesia, it offers insight into a broader framework that integrates hierarchical relationships while interacting through coexistence, negotiation, and coordination in the governance of Islamic law.[a]

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Author Contribution Statement

Wildani Hefni: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Project Administration; Resources; Validation; Writing Original Draft; Writing, Review & Editing.

Qurrotul Uyun: Data Curation; Resources; Validation; Writing, Review & Editing.

Umar Chamdan: Project Administration; Validation; Writing, Review & Editing.

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