

Epistemological Change in MUI Fatwas; Religious Authority and Hijri Calendar Unification in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines epistemological and institutional changes in the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) fatwas on determining the beginning of the Hijri month by comparing the 1980 fatwa with MUI Fatwa No. 02 of 2004. Using a qualitative, library-based approach, the study applies Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, Kuhn's concept of paradigm change, and Abou El Fadl's theory of religious authority to analyze the fatwas' legal reasoning, treatment of astronomical knowledge, and allocation of decision-making authority. The findings reveal a significant reorientation in the 2004 fatwa, which more explicitly integrates astronomical calculation (*hisāb*) and crescent-moon sighting (*ru'yat*) within a government-led framework and establishes consultation involving the MUI, Islamic organizations, and relevant institutions. However, this development does not, by itself, establish a paradigm shift in the strict Kuhnian sense or ensure agreement among Muslim organizations. Differences in Indonesian calendrical practice during 2022–2026 illustrate the continuing challenges of unification despite the implementation of the New MABIMS crescent visibility criteria. The study argues that unifying the Hijri calendar requires not only astronomical criteria but also shared understandings of jurisprudential principles, legitimate authority, and collective decision-making procedures.

Keywords: MUI fatwas, Hijri calendar unification, epistemological change, religious authority

Penelitian ini mengkaji perubahan epistemologis dan kelembagaan dalam fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) tentang penetapan awal bulan Hijriah dengan membandingkan fatwa tahun 1980 dan Fatwa MUI Nomor 02 Tahun 2004. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan dengan menerapkan analisis wacana kritis Fairclough, konsep perubahan paradigma Kuhn, dan teori otoritas keagamaan Abou El Fadl untuk menganalisis penalaran hukum, kedudukan pengetahuan astronomi, serta distribusi otoritas dalam pengambilan keputusan pada kedua fatwa tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya perubahan signifikan dalam fatwa tahun 2004, yang secara lebih eksplisit mengintegrasikan hisab dan rukyat dalam kerangka penetapan yang dipimpin oleh pemerintah serta menetapkan mekanisme konsultasi dengan MUI, organisasi Islam, dan lembaga terkait. Namun, perubahan tersebut tidak dengan sendirinya membuktikan terjadinya pergeseran paradigma dalam pengertian Kuhnian yang ketat maupun menjamin kesepakatan antarorganisasi Islam. Perbedaan praktik penanggalan di Indonesia selama 2022–2026 menunjukkan bahwa unifikasi tetap menghadapi tantangan meskipun kriteria visibilitas hilal MABIMS Baru telah diterapkan. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa unifikasi kalender Hijriah memerlukan bukan hanya kriteria astronomis, tetapi juga kesepakatan tentang prinsip fikih, otoritas yang sah, serta prosedur pengambilan keputusan kolektif.

Kata Kunci: fatwa MUI, penyatuan kalender Hijriah, perubahan epistemologis, otoritas keagamaan

A. Introduction

Determining the beginning of the Islamic lunar month remains a significant issue in contemporary Islamic law, involving not only astronomical calculations and crescent observation but also competing understandings of religious authority and the legitimacy of calendrical decisions. Differences in the methods and criteria used to determine the beginning of the month have contributed to recurring discrepancies in the dates of Ramadan and Islamic festivals across Muslim communities.¹ In Indonesia, these differences are particularly visible in the practices of major Islamic organizations, including Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, whose approaches to determining the beginning of the lunar month have historically differed. However, the issue cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between crescent observation (*ru'yat*) and astronomical calculation (*hisab*), because legal reasoning, institutional authority, and the criteria adopted by the respective actors also shape calendrical decisions. The persistence of these differences therefore raises a broader question: how can changes in religious-legal reasoning contribute to, or remain insufficient for, the achievement of a unified national Hijri calendar?

In Indonesia, efforts to establish a unified Hijri calendar have involved state-led coordination, inter-organizational deliberation, and the development of astronomical criteria. Institutional initiatives include establishing the *Hisab Rukyat* Agency, regional cooperation through MABIMS, and the government's *ithbat* sessions, which provide a forum for determining the start of key Islamic lunar months.² Nevertheless, institutional coordination has not automatically produced consensus among all Islamic organizations, as differences in calendrical methods and religious authority continue to shape how the beginning of the lunar month is determined.³ Within this context, the Indonesian Ulema Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI) occupies an important position because its collective fatwas provide religious-legal guidance while engaging with state institutions and the diverse methodological positions of Indonesian Muslim organizations.⁴ Two MUI fatwas are particularly relevant: the 1980 fatwa on determining the beginnings of Ramadan,

¹ Manswab Mahsen Abdulrahman, "The Impact of Lunar Sighting Discrepancies on the Beginning and End of Ramadan Fasting: A Comparative Fiqh Analysis and the Role of AI in Resolving Differences," *Jurnal Syariah* 33, no. 2 (August 31, 2025): 263–90, <https://doi.org/10.22452/syariah.vol33no2.5>; 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 (June 30, 2025): 149–66, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v19i1.10574>; Nailur Rahmi et al., "Contestation of the Determination of 'Idul Adha and Its Implementation According to Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul 'Ulama," *Nurani: Jurnal Kajian Syari'ah Dan Masyarakat* 25, no. 1 (June 24, 2025): 262–79, <https://doi.org/10.19109/nurani.v25i1.26563>.

² Tim Penyusun Subdit Hisab Rukyah dan Syariah, *Keputusan Menteri Agama RI: 1 Ramadan, Syawal, Zulhijjah 1381 H - 1440 H/1962 M-2019 M* (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam, 2019); Ahmad Syifa'ul Anam, "Dinamika Sidang Isbat Di Indonesia Dari Tahun 1381-1441 H/1962-2020 M; Kajian Hukum, Siyasa Syari'yyah Dan Sejarah" (Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, 2022), 22;114, <https://eprints.walisongo.ac.id/id/eprint/25139/>.

³ Muhammad Rasyid, *Monograf: Fatwa-Fatwa Falakiyah Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Metode Penetapan Fatwa, Pengaruh Sosial Politik Dan Pertimbangan Sains)*, ed. Rizki Zakwandi (Bengkalis: Dotplus Publisher, 2025), 153–55; Mukhsin Aseri et al., "Negotiating Authority and Knowledge: Religion, Science, and Politics in the Fatwa Transformations of the Indonesian Ulema Council," *Journal of Islamic Law* 6, no. 2 (August 23, 2025): 286–316, <https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v6i2.4702>.

⁴ Mukhsin Achmad, "The Indonesian Council Ulama (MUI) and Religious Discourse In Indonesia," *Tebuireng: Journal of Islamic Studies and Society* 2, no. 2 (July 31, 2022): 123–42, <https://doi.org/10.33752/tjiss.v2i2.2609>; Aseri et al., "Negotiating Authority and Knowledge: Religion, Science, and Politics in the Fatwa Transformations of the Indonesian Ulema Council."

Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah, and MUI Fatwa No. 02 of 2004 on the same subject.⁵ The 2004 fatwa directs the government to determine these months by combining crescent observation (*ru'yat al-hilāl*) and astronomical calculation (*hisāb*), and requires consultation with the MUI, Islamic organizations, and relevant institutions.⁶ Comparing these two fatwas therefore provides a basis for examining how changes in legal reasoning and the institutional recognition of astronomical knowledge relate to the continuing challenge of national Hijri calendar unification.

Previous studies have examined how Indonesia determines the beginning of the Islamic lunar month from several perspectives, including MUI fatwa methodology, differences in astronomical criteria, and contestation over religious authority. Widigdo and Hamid (2018) showed that political considerations beyond Islamic jurisprudence may shape the formulation and influence of MUI fatwas.⁷ More recently, Aseri et al. (2025) examined how religious authority, scientific knowledge, and political contexts interact in transforming MUI fatwas.⁸ Rahmi et al. (2025) explored differences in how Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and the government determine Islamic holidays,⁹ while Rofiuddin et al. (2025) investigated resistance to governmental authority in determining the Islamic calendar.¹⁰ These studies provide important insights into the institutional, methodological, and sociopolitical dimensions of calendrical disagreements in Indonesia. Nevertheless, scholars have not sufficiently examined the epistemological shifts between the 1980 MUI fatwa and MUI Fatwa No. 02 of 2004 as a connected process involving changes in legal reasoning, the status of astronomical knowledge, and the institutional location of religious authority. In particular, further analysis is needed to explain how these changes relate to the continuing challenge of unifying the national Hijri calendar.

Building on the foregoing discussion, this study examines the epistemological shifts reflected in the 1980 MUI fatwa and MUI Fatwa No. 02 of 2004 on determining the start of the Islamic lunar month. It focuses on changes in legal reasoning, the treatment of astronomical knowledge, and the role of religious authority in formulating calendrical decisions. Using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, complemented by Kuhn's concept of paradigm change and Abou El Fadl's approach to religious authority, this study investigates how the two fatwas articulate the relationship among Islamic legal reasoning, astronomical knowledge, and institutional decision-making. It also considers the implications of these changes for the ongoing effort to unify the Hijri calendar in Indonesia. By examining epistemological change alongside the institutional and sociopolitical dimensions of religious authority, this study seeks to explain why developments in fatwa

⁵ Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Fatwa Tentang Penentuan Awal Ramadhan, Awal Syawal/Idul Fitri, Awal Dzulhijjah/Idul Adha Tahun 1980" (1980); Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Fatwa MUI Nomor 02 Tahun 2004 Tentang Penetapan Awal Ramadhan, Syawal Dan Dzulhijjah" (2004).

⁶ Majelis Ulama Indonesia, Fatwa MUI Nomor 02 Tahun 2004 Tentang Penetapan Awal Ramadhan, Syawal Dan Dzulhijjah.

⁷ Mohammad Syifa Amin Widigdo and Homaidi Hamid, "The Power of Fatwā in Indonesia: An Analysis of MUI's Controversial Fatwās," *Afkaruna* 14, no. 2 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.18196/AIJIS.2018.0085.146-165>.

⁸ Aseri et al., "Negotiating Authority and Knowledge: Religion, Science, and Politics in the Fatwa Transformations of the Indonesian Ulema Council."

⁹ Rahmi et al., "Contestation of the Determination of 'Idul Adha and Its Implementation According to Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul 'Ulama."

¹⁰ Ahmad Adib Rofiuddin, Mahsun Mahsun, and Arifana Nur Khoлиq, "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 3, 2025): 250–63, <https://doi.org/10.25217/jf.v10i1.5159>.

reasoning do not necessarily translate into agreement among the actors involved in determining the Islamic calendar.

B. Method

This study employs a qualitative, library-based research design and critical discourse analysis to examine epistemological changes in the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) fatwas on determining the start of the Islamic lunar month. The primary units of analysis are two MUI fatwas: the 1980 fatwa on determining the beginning of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah, and MUI Fatwa No. 02 of 2004 on the same subject. These documents were purposively selected because they address the same calendrical issue but differ in their legal provisions and approaches to determining the start of the lunar month, making them suitable for comparative analysis. The primary data consist of the texts of these two fatwas. Secondary data comprise academic literature on Islamic legal reasoning (*ijtihād*), Islamic astronomy, religious authority, and the sociopolitical and institutional context of efforts to unify Indonesia's national Hijri calendar.

Data were collected through a systematic review of documentary sources. The study selected secondary sources based on their relevance to the research objectives, authenticity, and substantive contribution to understanding changes in fatwa methodology and efforts to unify the national Hijri calendar. In addition to academic literature, the study examined records of the determination of the beginning of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah by the Indonesian government, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah from 2022 to 2026. These records were compiled from the Ministry of Religious Affairs' *ithbāt* session decisions, NU's *ikhbār* announcements, and Muhammadiyah's *ma'lūmāt*. The calendar data were compared to identify agreements and disagreements among the three authorities and to contextualize the ongoing challenges of national Hijri calendar unification. The study also classified and compared the two MUI fatwas across five dimensions: the forum in which each fatwa was issued, its legal foundations, the method of *ijtihād* employed, its legal provisions, and its consideration of scientific and astronomical knowledge. This comparative procedure identified similarities and differences between the two fatwas, while the calendar data from 2022 to 2026 provided contextual evidence of contemporary calendrical divergence rather than direct proof of a causal relationship between the 2004 fatwa and subsequent disagreements.

Data analysis employed Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis (CDA), comprising textual analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice.¹¹ At the textual level, the analysis examined the language, argumentative structure, legal reasoning, and *qawā'id al-fiqhiyyah* employed in each fatwa, with particular attention to the relationship between *hisāb* and *ru'yat*, the use of astronomical knowledge, and the legal provisions governing the determination of the beginning of the lunar month. At the level of discursive practice, the analysis examined how the MUI, the government, and Islamic organizations formulated and interpreted the fatwas. At the sociocultural level, the findings were situated within Indonesia's broader institutional and

¹¹ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis in Transdisciplinary Research*, Chap. 3 in *A New Agenda in (Critical) Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Paul Chilton (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2005), 53–70.

sociopolitical context, particularly debates over religious authority and efforts to unify the national Hijri calendar. Kuhn's concept of paradigm change helped assess whether differences between the two fatwas indicated a shift in underlying epistemological assumptions,¹² while Abou El Fadl's theory of religious authority informed the analysis of the legitimacy and positioning of religious and state authorities in calendrical decision-making.¹³ These complementary frameworks helped interpret the relationship between changes in legal reasoning, the status of astronomical knowledge, and the ongoing challenges of calendar unification.

C. Result and Discussion

1. The Challenge of Hijri Calendar Unification in Indonesia

Unifying the national Hijri calendar remains a persistent challenge in Indonesia, particularly in determining the start of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah. Historical accounts indicate that disagreements over determining these lunar months existed during the Dutch colonial period and have continued to shape discussions of religious practice and calendrical authority in Indonesia.¹⁴ These disagreements cannot be understood solely as technical differences in astronomical calculation or crescent-moon observation. Rather, they also involve competing interpretations of Islamic legal guidance, the role of religious and state authorities, and the principles used to establish the start of a lunar month. Consequently, calendar unification is not merely a matter of standardizing astronomical criteria; it also requires consideration of the religious and institutional foundations through which calendrical decisions are formulated and accepted.

Disagreements over determining the beginning of the Hijri month in Indonesia stem from several interrelated issues. Fikri et al. identify three principal sources of divergence: differing interpretations of *ulū al-amr* (the authority responsible for determining the beginning of the month), differing understandings of the role of crescent-moon sighting and astronomical calculation (*ru'yat* and *ḥisāb*), and the absence of a universally accepted Islamic calendar framework, particularly regarding the geographical scope of the *maṭla'* (the region within which a crescent-moon sighting is considered applicable). These issues represent distinct but interconnected dimensions of calendrical disagreement.¹⁵ The first concerns the legitimacy of the authority whose decision should be followed; the second concerns the relationship between religious evidence and astronomical knowledge; and the third concerns the geographical application of a lunar-month determination. Consequently, resolving disagreements over the Hijri calendar requires more than agreement on crescent-visibility criteria. It also requires

¹² Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd Ed (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).

¹³ El Fadl Khaled Abou, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2014).

¹⁴ E. Gobée and C. Adriaanse, *Nasihat-Nasihat C. Snouck Hurgronje Semasa Kepegawaiannya Kepada Pemerintah Hindia Belanda 1889-1936 Diterjemahkan Dari E. Gobée Dan Adriaanse "Ambtelijke Adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje"* (Jakarta: INIS (Indonesian-Netherlands Cooperation in Islamic Studies), 1993), 1381; Nazaruddin Umar et al., *Upaya Penyatuan Kalender Hijriyah Indonesia; Sejak 1975 Hingga Kini* (Pamekasan: Duta Media Publishing, 2018), 43.

¹⁵ Mursyid Fikri et al., "The Harmonizing the Hijri Calendar; A Comparative Insight of Indonesia's Imkān Al-Ru'yah Crescent Visibility Criteria with Malaysia and Saudi Arabia," *Mazahibuna* 7, no. 1 (March 26, 2025): 38–53, <https://doi.org/10.24252/mazahibuna.vi.51264>.

consideration of the authority empowered to make calendrical decisions and the geographical scope within which those decisions are recognized.

In response to recurring disagreements, the Indonesian government has developed institutional mechanisms to facilitate coordination and promote greater consistency in determining the beginning of the Hijri month. Since 1962, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has convened *ithbāt* sessions to determine the beginnings of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah. These sessions bring together representatives of Islamic organizations, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), and relevant scientific institutions to review available evidence and issue an official determination.¹⁶ Another institutional initiative was the establishment of the *Hisab Rukyat* Agency (*Badan Hisab Rukyat/BHR*) in 1972, which brought together government representatives, Islamic organizations, and specialists in Islamic astronomy and law. The agency was intended to facilitate dialogue on methods of determining the beginning of the month and provide technical recommendations to the Minister of Religious Affairs.¹⁷ These mechanisms demonstrate that the government's approach has involved not only the formulation of astronomical criteria but also institutional efforts to coordinate diverse religious and scientific perspectives. Nevertheless, formal coordination mechanisms do not necessarily ensure that all Islamic organizations will adopt the same calendrical determination.

Beyond national institutional mechanisms, Indonesia has pursued greater calendrical coordination through regional cooperation within MABIMS, a forum involving Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. One key area of cooperation has been formulating shared criteria for *imkān al-ru'yah*, or the possibility of crescent-moon visibility. The earlier MABIMS criteria set minimum thresholds of 2° for lunar altitude, 3° for elongation, and eight hours for lunar age after conjunction. These criteria sought to bring astronomical calculation and crescent-moon observation into a common framework. Subsequently, in response to developments in astronomical research and the limitations of the earlier thresholds, Indonesia began applying the New MABIMS criteria to determine the beginning of Ramadan 1443 AH in 2022. The revised criteria require a minimum lunar altitude of 3° and a minimum elongation of 6.4°. ¹⁸ This revision marked an important development in integrating astronomical considerations into official calendrical decision-making. However, adopting common visibility criteria does not necessarily produce uniform dates when Islamic organizations continue to differ in their preferred methods, sources of authority, or approaches to the geographical scope of lunar-month determination. The dates announced by the government, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah during 2022–

¹⁶ Tim Penyusun Subdit Hisab Rukyah dan Syariah, *Keputusan Menteri Agama RI: 1 Ramadan, Syawal, Zulhijjah 1381 H - 1440 H/1962 M-2019 M*; Anam, "Dinamika Sidang Isbat Di Indonesia Dari Tahun 1381-1441 H/1962-2020 M; Kajian Hukum, Siyasah Syari'yyah Dan Sejarah"; Ahmad Fadholi, "Sidang Isbat, Urgensi Dan Dinamikanya," *Asy-Syar'iyah: Jurnal Ilmu Syari'ah Dan Perbankan Islam* 4, no. 2 (December 4, 2019): 147–69, <https://doi.org/10.32923/asy.v4i2.1000>.

¹⁷ Rasyid, *Monograf: Fatwa-Fatwa Falakiyah Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Metode Penetapan Fatwa, Pengaruh Sosial Politik Dan Pertimbangan Sains)*, 153–55.

¹⁸ Maskufa Maskufa et al., "Implementation of the New MABIMS Crescent Visibility Criteria: Efforts to Unite the Hijriyah Calendar in the Southeast Asian Region," *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 22, no. 1 (June 30, 2022): 209–35, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v22i1.22275>; Achmad Mulyadi et al., "Dynamics of Implementing the New MABIMS Criteria on the Hijri Calendar (Takwim Hijri) By the Indonesian and Malaysian Governments," *Al-Adalah* 22, no. 2 (December 20, 2025): 381–408, <https://doi.org/10.24042/adalah.v22i2.28543>.

2026 show how far these differences have persisted since the implementation of the New MABIMS criteria.

Table 1. Comparison of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha Dates on 2022-2026

Hijri	Occasion	Muhammadiyah	Nahdlatul Ulama	Government
1443	Ramadan	April 2, 2022	April 3, 2022	April 3, 2022
1443	Eid al-Fitr	May 2, 2022	May 2, 2022	May 2, 2022
1443	Eid al-Adha	July 9, 2022	July 10, 2022	July 10, 2022
1444	Ramadan	March 23, 2023	March 23, 2023	March 23, 2023
1444	Eid al-Fitr	April 21, 2023	April 22, 2023	April 22, 2023
1444	Eid al-Adha	June 28, 2023	June 29, 2023	June 29, 2023
1445	Ramadan	March 11, 2024	March 12, 2024	March 12, 2024
1445	Eid al-Fitr	April 10, 2024	April 10, 2024	April 10, 2024
1445	Eid al-Adha	June 17, 2024	June 17, 2024	June 17, 2024
1446	Ramadan	March 1, 2025	March 1, 2025	March 1, 2025
1446	Eid al-Fitr	March 31, 2025	March 31, 2025	March 31, 2025
1446	Eid al-Adha	June 6, 2025	June 6, 2025	June 6, 2025
1447	Ramadan	February 18, 2026	February 19, 2026	February 19, 2026
1447	Eid al-Fitr	March 20, 2026	March 21, 2026	March 21, 2026
1447	Eid al-Adha	May 27, 2026	May 27, 2026	May 27, 2026

Source: *The author's research from various sources*

The comparison in Table 1 indicates that differences in determining the beginning of the Hijri month have persisted since the implementation of the New MABIMS criteria, although the extent of agreement has varied across years and religious occasions. This pattern suggests that adopting shared astronomical visibility thresholds does not, by itself, guarantee uniform calendrical decisions among the government, NU, and Muhammadiyah. The continuing differences need to be understood in relation to three interconnected conditions identified in the literature on Hijri calendar unification: recognition of a common authority, agreement on the criteria for determining the beginning of the month, and consensus on the geographical scope of the calendar's application (*maṭla'*). These conditions concern not only astronomical calculations but also Islamic legal interpretation and the legitimacy of institutional decision-making. The Indonesian experience therefore illustrates the distinction between harmonizing technical criteria and achieving broader agreement on calendrical authority and practice. The persistence of different dates should not be taken as evidence that the New MABIMS criteria have had no effect; rather, it indicates that technical harmonization alone may be insufficient to resolve disagreements involving distinct methodological and institutional commitments.¹⁹

Taken together, the historical development of calendrical institutions, the adoption of updated astronomical criteria, and the persistence of differences in calendrical decisions indicate

¹⁹ Thomas Djamaluddin, *Astronomi Memberi Solusi Penyatuan Ummat* (Jakarta: Lembaga Penerbangan dan Antariksa Nasional (LAPAN), 2011), 24–26.

that Hijri calendar unification in Indonesia involves more than technical standardization. It also requires negotiation over legal interpretation, institutional legitimacy, and the geographical scope of calendrical decisions. In this context, the MUI's 1980 fatwa and No. 02 of 2004 offer a useful starting point for examining how Islamic legal reasoning and religious authority have been articulated in response to the challenge of calendar unification. Comparing the two fatwas allows an examination of whether and how the recognition of astronomical calculation alongside crescent-moon observation, together with the repositioning of governmental authority, reflects a change in the MUI's epistemological approach. The following section therefore examines the legal arguments, decision-making arrangements, and substantive rulings of the two fatwas to clarify the nature of this change and its implications for the continuing pursuit of a unified national Hijri calendar.

2. Epistemological Change in MUI Fatwas: From *Ru'yat* to the Integration of *Ḥisāb* and *Ru'yat*

A comparison between the 1980 MUI fatwa on determining the beginning of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah and MUI Fatwa No. 02 of 2004 provides a basis for examining changes in the Council's legal reasoning and its approach to religious authority in calendrical decision-making. Although both fatwas address the same fundamental issue, they differ in their provisions on crescent-moon sighting (*ru'yat*), astronomical calculation (*ḥisāb*), the geographical scope of a sighting (*maṭla'*), and the government's role in determining the beginning of the lunar month. These differences fit within broader scholarship on MUI fatwas, which examines their contribution to the development of contemporary Islamic law and their relationship to changing institutional and political contexts.²⁰ In particular, Ichwan's analysis of MUI after the fall of Suharto highlights the importance of understanding the Council's religious authority in relation to its evolving relationship with the state.²¹ This institutional perspective provides useful context for the present study, while the two fatwas remain the primary evidence for assessing the nature and extent of epistemological change between 1980 and 2004.

The 1980 MUI fatwa addressed determining the beginning of Ramadan and Shawwal by acknowledging two established positions among Muslim jurists on the geographical scope of crescent-moon sighting (*maṭla'*). One position, associated with the Shafi'i school, recognizes regional differences in the applicability of a sighting, whereas the other, attributed in the fatwa to the majority of jurists, does not regard such differences as limiting the applicability of a sighting. To strengthen Islamic solidarity (*ukhuwwah Islāmiyyah*), the MUI adopted the majority position and stated that a crescent-moon sighting in one Muslim country could apply internationally, pending the establishment of an international authority whose decision Muslim countries would recognize. Until such an authority existed, the determination remained subject to the decision of each government. The fatwa treated Dhu al-Hijjah differently, stipulating that each country should follow its own *maṭla'* and that Indonesia should not follow another country's Eid al-Adha

²⁰ La Jamaa, "Fatwas of the Indonesian Council of Ulama and Its Contributions to the Development of Contemporary Islamic Law in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 8, no. 1 (July 2, 2018): 29–56, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v8i1.29-56>.

²¹ Moch. Nur Ichwan, "Ulamā', State and Politics: Majelis Ulama Indonesia After Suharto," *Islamic Law and Society* 12, no. 1 (2005): 45–72, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1568519053123867>.

determination when countries had different *maṭla'*. These provisions indicate that the 1980 fatwa concerned not only the legal basis of crescent-moon sighting but also the geographical reach of its application and the institutional authority required to implement it.²²

MUI Fatwa No. 02 of 2004 marks a substantive shift, placing the determination of the beginning of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah under the Indonesian government, through the Minister of Religious Affairs, using both *ru'yat* and *ḥisāb*. The fatwa requires Indonesian Muslims to follow the government's determination and obliges the Minister to consult the MUI, Islamic organizations, and relevant institutions before deciding. It also permits using crescent-moon sightings from locations outside Indonesia when those locations share Indonesia's *maṭla'*. Its legal reasoning draws on Qur'anic verses concerning astronomical reckoning and obedience to legitimate authority, Prophetic traditions on crescent-moon sighting and obedience to leaders, and the fiqh principle that a ruler's decision can resolve disputes among the community.²³ Compared with the 1980 fatwa, the 2004 ruling therefore articulates a more explicit institutional framework linking astronomical calculation, crescent-moon sighting, and governmental authority. This change can be examined in the broader context of MUI's evolving relationship with the state, a subject explored by Moch. Nur Ichwan in his analysis of the Council after the end of the New Order.²⁴ Nevertheless, the wording of the 2004 fatwa establishes the integration of *ḥisāb* and *ru'yat* within a government-led process; it does not, by itself, demonstrate that the two methods are treated as interchangeable in every legal or operational circumstance.

Table 2. Comparison of the 1980 MUI Fatwa and MUI Fatwa No. 02 of 2004

Analytical Dimension	1980 Fatwa MUI	MUI Fatwa No. 02 of 2004
Issuing body	MUI National Consultative Assembly	MUI Fatwa Commission
Main issue	Determination of the beginning of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah	Determination of the beginning of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah
Legal and jurisprudential basis	Recognizes differing juristic positions on the geographical applicability of crescent-moon sighting (<i>maṭla'</i>); adopts the majority position in the interest of <i>ukhuwwah Islāmiyyah</i>	Draws on Qur'anic verses, Prophetic traditions, juristic opinions, and the principle that a ruler's decision can resolve disputes
Role of <i>ru'yat</i>	Crescent-moon sighting is the basis for determining the beginning of the relevant months; international applicability is	Crescent-moon sighting remains part of the determination process and is integrated with <i>ḥisāb</i>

²² Majelis Ulama Indonesia, Fatwa Tentang Penentuan Awal Ramadhan, Awal Syawal/Idul Fitri, Awal Dzulhijjah/Idul Adha Tahun 1980.

²³ Majelis Ulama Indonesia, Fatwa MUI Nomor 02 Tahun 2004 Tentang Penetapan Awal Ramadhan, Syawal Dan Dzulhijjah.

²⁴ Ichwan, "Ulamā', State and Politics: Majelis Ulama Indonesia After Suharto."

	accepted for Ramadan and Shawwal	
Role of <i>ḥisāb</i>	The provisions examined emphasize <i>ru'yat</i> ; the fatwa should not automatically be interpreted as an explicit, comprehensive rejection of <i>ḥisāb</i>	Explicitly recognizes the combined use of <i>ḥisāb</i> and <i>ru'yat</i> in government determinations
Geographical scope (<i>maṭla'</i>)	International applicability of sighting for Ramadan and Shawwal; for Dhu al-Hijjah, each country follows its own <i>maṭla'</i>	Sighting results from outside Indonesia may be used when the location shares the same <i>maṭla'</i> as Indonesia
Government authority	Each government retains a role in determining the beginning of the month pending the establishment of an international authority recognized by Muslim countries	The Minister of Religious Affairs is responsible for the determination on behalf of the government
Consultation mechanism	The provisions do not set out the same explicit consultation framework as the 2004 fatwa	The Minister is required to consult the MUI, Islamic organizations, and relevant institutions
Compliance with the determination	Refers to government decisions within the framework of the fatwa's provisions	Indonesian Muslims are required to comply with the government's determination
Principal institutional orientation	Seeks international solidarity while accommodating different geographical applications for Dhu al-Hijjah	Establishes a more explicit national framework integrating astronomical calculation, crescent-moon sighting, and governmental decision-making

As shown in Table 2, the differences between the two fatwas extend beyond their legal provisions to how astronomical knowledge, Islamic legal reasoning, and religious authority are brought together in calendrical decision-making. The 1980 fatwa primarily addressed the geographical applicability of crescent-moon sighting (*ru'yat*), distinguishing between determining Ramadan and Shawwal and determining Dhu al-Hijjah. By contrast, Fatwa No. 02 of 2004 explicitly incorporated both astronomical calculation (*ḥisāb*) and *ru'yat* into a government-led framework for determining the beginning of the lunar month. This development can be examined in light of Rasyid et al.'s research on how scientific developments shape changes in Islamic legal thought, and Aseri et al.'s analysis of how religious authority and knowledge are negotiated in MUI fatwa transformations.²⁵ These studies provide a broader analytical context for understanding why

²⁵ Muhammad Rasyid et al., "Science And Its Role In Changes In Islamic Legal Thought (An Analysis Of Changes In The Fatwa Of The Indonesian Ulema Council Due To Recent Scientific Findings)," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pemikiran* 23, no. 2 (2023): 120–37, <https://doi.org/10.18592/sjhp.v23i2.11361>; Aseri et al., "Negotiating Authority and Knowledge: Religion, Science, and Politics in the Fatwa Transformations of the Indonesian Ulema Council."

changes in fatwa provisions should be considered alongside developments in scientific knowledge and institutional authority. Nevertheless, the epistemological significance of the two fatwas must be established through close readings of their texts: the emphasis on *ru'yat* in the 1980 fatwa does not necessarily demonstrate a categorical rejection of *hisāb*, while the recognition of both methods in the 2004 fatwa does not establish that they are interchangeable in every legal or operational circumstance. The key question, therefore, is how far the 2004 fatwa reconfigured the relationship among astronomical knowledge, legal reasoning, and the authority to determine the beginning of the lunar month.

From the perspective of Thomas S. Kuhn's theory of scientific change, the differences between the two MUI fatwas may indicate an epistemological reorientation, but they do not automatically constitute a paradigm shift in the strict Kuhnian sense. The 2004 fatwa explicitly combines *hisāb* and *ru'yat* within a national decision-making framework and clarifies the government's role in establishing the beginning of the lunar month. These changes suggest a reconfiguration of the relationship between admissible forms of astronomical knowledge, legal reasoning, and institutional authority. This interpretation is consistent with broader studies showing that MUI fatwas can be shaped by interactions among religious argumentation, scientific developments, and sociopolitical considerations.²⁶ Nevertheless, the two documents alone do not establish a Kuhnian crisis or show that the earlier framework was displaced through a process equivalent to a scientific revolution. A more defensible conclusion is that the 2004 fatwa represents a significant epistemological and institutional adjustment within MUI's collective *ijtihad*. Whether this adjustment amounts to a paradigm shift depends on how much it changed the underlying criteria for accepting astronomical knowledge and the principles governing legitimate calendrical authority, rather than merely revising the legal provisions for determining the beginning of the lunar month.

Taken together, the comparison indicates that MUI Fatwa No. 02 of 2004 introduced a more explicit framework for integrating astronomical calculation (*hisāb*), crescent-moon sighting (*ru'yat*), and governmental authority into the determination of the beginning of the lunar month. The change is significant not simply because both methods are recognized, but because the fatwa specifies institutional responsibilities and a consultation mechanism for reaching a national determination. This interpretation accords with scholarship that views MUI fatwas as products of collective legal reasoning shaped by the interaction of religious arguments, scientific knowledge, and institutional circumstances.²⁷ However, the formal integration of methods and authority should not be equated with a unified calendar: disagreements among Indonesian Muslim organizations show that accepting a governmental framework does not necessarily produce agreement on the criteria or geographical scope of calendrical decisions. The distinction between formal legal reform and broader social acceptance therefore remains central to understanding the implications of the 2004 fatwa. This distinction raises the next question: how did the changing

²⁶ Syifa Amin Widigdo and Hamid, "The Power of Fatwā in Indonesia: An Analysis of MUI's Controversial Fatwās"; Aseri et al., "Negotiating Authority and Knowledge: Religion, Science, and Politics in the Fatwa Transformations of the Indonesian Ulema Council."

²⁷ Muhammad Rasyid et al., "Study Of The Falakiyah Fatwas Of The Indonesian Ulema Council; Methodological Analysis, Socio-Political Influences and Science Considerations," *Journal of Law and Governance* 7, no. 1 (2024): 45–62; Aseri et al., "Negotiating Authority and Knowledge: Religion, Science, and Politics in the Fatwa Transformations of the Indonesian Ulema Council."

relationship among the MUI, the state, and other Muslim organizations shape the fatwa's formulation and reception?.

3. Socio-Political Context and the Negotiation of Religious Authority

The changes between the 1980 MUI fatwa and Fatwa No. 02 of 2004 should also be understood within the broader sociopolitical context in which religious authority is formulated and negotiated in Indonesia. Fatwas are not merely textual expressions of Islamic legal reasoning; they are also institutional pronouncements whose interpretation and influence depend on the relationships among religious scholars, state institutions, and the Muslim communities to whom they are addressed. Widigdo and Hamid's analysis of controversial MUI fatwas highlights the importance of examining fatwa-making in relation to political power and institutional circumstances, while Ichwan's study of MUI after the fall of Suharto provides a broader account of the Council's evolving relationship with the state.²⁸ These perspectives do not, by themselves, establish the specific causes of the changes in the two calendrical fatwas. They do, however, provide an analytical basis for investigating how the MUI's legal reasoning concerning the beginning of the lunar month intersected with questions of governmental authority, institutional legitimacy, and the aspiration to establish a nationally coordinated Hijri calendar.

The institutional position of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) is particularly relevant to understanding how religious authority operates in the determination of the beginning of the Islamic lunar month. Since its establishment, the MUI has functioned as a national forum for Muslim scholars and intellectuals to formulate religious guidance on issues affecting Indonesian Muslim society. Its institutional role places it at the intersection of Islamic legal reasoning, scholarly deliberation, and engagement with state institutions. Achmad's study of the MUI and religious discourse in Indonesia, together with Sholeh's discussion of the dynamics of fatwa-making for the public good, provides a useful context for examining this institutional function.²⁹ In the case of the 2004 fatwa on the beginning of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah, the requirement that the Minister of Religious Affairs consult the MUI, Islamic organizations, and relevant institutions illustrates a formal mechanism for incorporating religious expertise into governmental decision-making. Nevertheless, this consultative arrangement should not be equated with a transfer of all religious authority to the state or with the automatic acceptance of the government's determination by every Islamic organization. Rather, it demonstrates an institutional effort to coordinate religious and governmental roles while leaving open the broader question of how such coordination is recognized by Indonesia's diverse Muslim communities.

The post-Reformasi period provides an important context for examining the changing configuration of religious authority in Indonesia. The political transition following the end of the New Order altered the institutional environment in which Muslim scholars, Islamic organizations, and state institutions articulated and negotiated their respective roles in public religious affairs. Ichwan's analysis of the MUI after Suharto highlights the importance of examining the Council's

²⁸ Syifa Amin Widigdo and Hamid, "The Power of Fatwā in Indonesia: An Analysis of MUI's Controversial Fatwās."

²⁹ Achmad Achmad, "The Indonesian Council Ulama (MUI) and Religious Discourse In Indonesia," in *Metodologi Penetapan Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia; Penggunaan Prinsip Pencegahan Dalam Fatwa* (Jakarta: Emir, 2016), 21–22.

position amid changing state–ulama relations, while subsequent studies of MUI fatwas have explored how religious reasoning, scientific knowledge, and sociopolitical considerations shape religious rulings.³⁰ In the context of Islamic calendar determination, this broader institutional transformation offers a useful perspective for interpreting the 2004 fatwa's more explicit articulation of governmental responsibility and consultation with religious organizations. However, the chronological relationship between political reform and the fatwa's issuance should not be treated as proof that the former directly caused the latter. Rather, the post-Reformasi context helps situate the fatwa within a changing landscape of religious authority in which legal reasoning, institutional arrangements, and claims to legitimacy interact.

Negotiating religious authority in Indonesia's Hijri calendar determination involves not only the relationship between the MUI and the government but also the differing positions of major Islamic organizations, particularly Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. Although these institutions share the objective of establishing the beginning of Islamic lunar months for their respective communities, they may differ in the methods, criteria, and institutional procedures they use to reach calendrical decisions. The government's *ithbāt* process provides a formal mechanism for determining the beginning of religious months at the national level, while NU and Muhammadiyah also issue their own announcements based on their respective approaches. Research on Indonesian Islamic astronomical fatwas and the negotiation of religious authority provides a broader context for understanding why institutional coordination does not necessarily eliminate differences in calendrical practice.³¹ The disagreements over the determination of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah therefore illustrate the distinction between having a national decision-making mechanism and achieving substantive agreement among religious institutions. In this context, MUI Fatwa No. 02 of 2004 can be understood as an attempt to clarify the relationship between religious expertise and governmental responsibility, but its provisions alone cannot ensure that all organizations adopt identical astronomical criteria or recognize the same determination in every circumstance.

Comparing the two MUI fatwas shows that changes in legal reasoning and institutional arrangements must be distinguished from the broader social acceptance required for Hijri calendar unification. The 2004 fatwa articulates a more explicit framework for coordinating *hisāb*, *ru'yat*, and governmental responsibility, while the wider calendrical landscape continues to involve different methodological preferences and institutional positions among Indonesian Muslim organizations. This finding aligns with scholarship that situates MUI fatwas within the interplay of Islamic legal reasoning, scientific knowledge, and the institutional and political contexts in which religious authority is exercised. Nevertheless, the available evidence does not establish that the 2004 fatwa alone caused, or could have resolved, subsequent disagreements over the beginning of Islamic lunar months. Rather, the fatwa illustrates both the potential and the limits of institutional coordination: a formal framework can clarify the responsibilities of decision-making bodies, but its effectiveness in achieving calendar unification also depends on the acceptance of shared criteria

³⁰ Ichwan, "‘Ulamā', State and Politics: Majelis Ulama Indonesia After Suharto"; Aseri et al., "Negotiating Authority and Knowledge: Religion, Science, and Politics in the Fatwa Transformations of the Indonesian Ulema Council."

³¹ Rasyid et al., "Study Of The Falakiyah Fatwas Of The Indonesian Ulema Council; Methodological Analysis, Socio-Political Influences and Science Considerations"; Aseri et al., "Negotiating Authority and Knowledge: Religion, Science, and Politics in the Fatwa Transformations of the Indonesian Ulema Council."

and procedures among relevant religious institutions. The central issue, therefore, is not simply whether MUI's legal reasoning changed between 1980 and 2004, but whether that change was sufficient to bridge the continuing differences in jurisprudential interpretation, astronomical criteria, and the recognition of religious and governmental authority.

4. The Limits of Fatwa Reform in Achieving Hijri Calendar Unification

The shift from the 1980 MUI fatwa to Fatwa No. 02 of 2004 marks an important development in Islamic legal guidance on determining the beginning of the Hijri month. By explicitly incorporating both astronomical calculation (*ḥisāb*) and crescent-moon sighting (*ru'yat*) within a government-led decision-making framework, the 2004 fatwa established a clearer relationship between astronomical knowledge, Islamic legal reasoning, and governmental authority. Nevertheless, changes to a fatwa's formulation should not be equated with calendar unification. Studies of Indonesian calendrical disputes show that differences in determining Islamic lunar months remain connected to questions of jurisprudential interpretation, astronomical criteria, and the recognition of institutional authority.³² These ongoing differences suggest that legal reform, although important, cannot, by itself, guarantee agreement among the institutions and communities involved. The central issue, therefore, is whether integrating *ḥisāb* and *ru'yat* and clarifying governmental responsibility are sufficient to reconcile the different legal and methodological positions that shape calendrical practice in Indonesia. Addressing this question requires examining not only the provisions of the two MUI fatwas but also the classical jurisprudential plurality and the contemporary scientific and institutional conditions within which those provisions are interpreted and implemented.

The limits of fatwa reform must also be considered in light of the plurality of classical Islamic jurisprudence concerning the determination of the beginning of the lunar month. The Prophetic tradition instructing Muslims to begin and end fasting based on the sighting of the crescent moon provides a central textual foundation for discussions of *ru'yat*. However, jurists have differed over the legal implications and geographical scope of a sighting, particularly whether a sighting in one location should apply to Muslims elsewhere or whether differences in *maṭla'* should be taken into account. Comparative works on Islamic jurisprudence document different legal positions on these questions, showing that calendrical disagreements cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between religious observance and astronomical calculation.³³ Contemporary discussions of *ḥisāb* and *ru'yat* therefore take place within a broader legal tradition that requires considering the interpretation of textual evidence, the evaluation of astronomical knowledge, and the application of juristic principles together.³⁴ This historical plurality is important for assessing the two MUI fatwas: the 2004 fatwa's more explicit integration of *ḥisāb* and *ru'yat* can be understood as a

³² Rahmi et al., "Contestation of the Determination of 'Idul Adha and Its Implementation According to Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul 'Ulama'; Ahmad Adib Rofiuddin, Mahsun Mahsun, and Arifana Nur Kholiq, "State Authority and Religious Contestation: Resistance to Governmental Decisions on Islamic Calendar Determination in Indonesia."

³³ 'Abd ar-Rahmān Al-Jazīrī, *Kitāb Al-Fiqh 'ala Al-Mazāhib Al-Arba'ah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003), 500; Wahbah Al-Zuhaili, *Al-Fiqh Al-Islami Wa Adillatuh* (Damaskus: Dar al-Fikr, 1997), 609–10.

³⁴ Muhamad Syazwan Faiz et al., "Methods in Determining New Hijri Month: A Thematic Review from Islamic Jurisprudence Perspective," *Malaysian Journal of Syariah and Law* 13, no. 1 (March 26, 2025): 75–99, <https://doi.org/10.33102/mjssl.vol13no1.687>.

particular institutional and legal response to calendrical questions, rather than as proof that the underlying jurisprudential differences have been definitively resolved. Moreover, a juristic position in the classical tradition should not be confused with the MUI's explicit adoption of it unless the relevant fatwa text or supporting evidence establishes that connection.

The development of astronomical criteria for crescent-moon visibility illustrates both the potential and the limitations of technical harmonization in efforts to unify the Hijri calendar. In Southeast Asia, the adoption of the new MABIMS criterion, which requires a minimum lunar altitude of 3° and an elongation of 6.4°, represents an important attempt to establish a shared astronomical standard among Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Singapore.³⁵ Nevertheless, agreement on a visibility criterion does not necessarily produce identical calendrical decisions, because implementation remains tied to national procedures, the role assigned to *ru'yat*, and the institutional arrangements that determine religious dates. Maskufa et al. identify differences in policy implementation and the continued significance of actual crescent-moon sighting as factors shaping how Indonesia applies the new criteria in practice.³⁶ Research comparing crescent-visibility criteria and reviewing modern astronomical methods likewise demonstrates the importance of scientific models in assessing crescent visibility, although technical refinement alone cannot settle every jurisprudential or institutional question involved in calendar determination.³⁷ These findings suggest that the challenge of unification is not simply to establish a scientifically defensible criterion, but also to secure agreement on how that criterion should be interpreted and applied within a shared legal and institutional framework. Accordingly, the continuing diversity of calendrical practice should not be taken as evidence that astronomical criteria are ineffective; rather, it highlights the distinction between technical agreement on crescent visibility and broader agreement on the authority and procedures governing the Hijri calendar.

The relationship between legal reform and calendar unification also raises a broader question concerning the nature of *ijtihād* and the legitimacy of religious authority. Islamic legal reasoning allows jurists and institutions to address changing circumstances, but a revised legal position does not necessarily eliminate competing interpretations or secure universal acceptance. Yūsuf al-Qarāḍāwī's discussion of *ijtihād* in contemporary Islamic jurisprudence offers a broader framework for understanding the ongoing role of legal reasoning in responding to new circumstances, while Asrorun Ni'am Sholeh's study of MUI fatwa methodology highlights the importance of examining the principles and procedures by which institutions formulate religious rulings.³⁸ Khaled Abou El Fadl's analysis of Islamic legal authority further invites attention to the

³⁵ Maskufa et al., "Implementation of the New MABIMS Crescent Visibility Criteria: Efforts to Unite the Hijriyah Calendar in the Southeast Asian Region"; Ahmad Wahidi et al., "Political and Legal Policies in Determining Hijri Calendar among MABIMS Member Countries," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah* 18, no. 1 (June 15, 2026): 211–39, <https://doi.org/10.18860/j-fsh.v18i1.39636>.

³⁶ Maskufa et al., "Implementation of the New MABIMS Crescent Visibility Criteria: Efforts to Unite the Hijriyah Calendar in the Southeast Asian Region."

³⁷ Nazhatulshima Ahmad et al., "A New Crescent Moon Visibility Criteria Using Circular Regression Model: A Case Study of Teluk Kemang, Malaysia," *Sains Malaysiana* 49, no. 4 (April 30, 2020): 859–70, <https://doi.org/10.17576/jsm-2020-4904-15>; Faïd et al., "Methods in Determining New Hijri Month: A Thematic Review from Islamic Jurisprudence Perspective."

³⁸ Yūsuf Al-Qarāḍāwī, *Al-Ijtihād Fi Asy-Syarī'ah Al-Islāmiyyah; Ma'a Nazarāt Tajlīliyyah Fi Al-Ijtihād Al-Mu'āsirah* (Kuwait: Dār al-Qalām, 1996), 113–25; Asrorun Ni'am Sholeh, *Metodologi Penetapan Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia; Penggunaan Prinsip Pencegahan Dalam Fatwa* (Jakarta: Emir, 2016), xvii–xviii.

relationship between the exercise of authority and the grounds on which its claims to legitimacy are evaluated.³⁹ Applied to the Indonesian Hijri calendar, these perspectives suggest that the authority of a governmental determination, the legal reasoning supporting an MUI fatwa, and the acceptance of that determination by Islamic organizations are related but distinct questions. Fatwa reform can clarify a legal position and establish a coordination framework, but lasting unification also requires engaging with the reasons different institutions give for accepting, interpreting, or declining to follow a particular determination. Consequently, the challenge is not merely to formulate a more comprehensive legal ruling, but to develop a decision-making framework that can accommodate sound legal reasoning, reliable astronomical knowledge, and credible institutional procedures.

Taken together, the analysis shows that the limits of fatwa reform in achieving Hijri calendar unification stem from the interaction of jurisprudential plurality, astronomical criteria, institutional authority, and acceptance of collective decisions. The comparison between the 1980 MUI fatwa and Fatwa No. 02 of 2004 reveals a significant shift in how the relationship between *ḥisāb*, *ru'yat*, and governmental responsibility is articulated. However, this normative and institutional development does not, by itself, resolve the different legal interpretations and methodological preferences that continue to shape calendrical practice in Indonesia. Classical jurisprudence helps explain the historical depth of these differences, while contemporary astronomical research demonstrates the importance of establishing scientifically defensible criteria. At the same time, negotiations over religious authority shape how relevant institutions interpret and implement such criteria and legal provisions. This study therefore shows that epistemological change in fatwa-making should be assessed not only through changes in legal provisions but also through the relationship between scientific knowledge, jurisprudential reasoning, and institutional legitimacy. Because the present analysis is limited to two MUI fatwas, it cannot establish the full historical process through which calendrical policy and institutional positions evolved. Further research examining intervening MUI decisions, *ithbāt* session records, and the perspectives of key institutional actors would help clarify how these dimensions interact in practice. Hijri calendar unification should thus be understood as an ongoing process of legal, scientific, and institutional coordination rather than an automatic outcome of a single fatwa reform.

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the differences between the 1980 MUI fatwa and Fatwa No. 02 of 2004 reflect a significant shift in how legal guidance is formulated on determining the beginning of the Hijri month. Whereas the 1980 fatwa addressed the geographical applicability of crescent-moon sighting differently for Ramadan and Shawwal on the one hand and Dhu al-Hijjah on the other, the 2004 fatwa more explicitly integrated *ḥisāb* and *ru'yat* into a government-led decision-making framework. It also clarified the government's responsibility and established a consultation mechanism involving the MUI, Islamic organizations, and relevant institutions. These changes indicate an epistemological and institutional reorientation in the MUI's approach to calendrical determination. However, the available evidence does not establish that this transformation constitutes a paradigm shift in the strict Kuhnian sense, nor does it demonstrate that any single

³⁹ Khaled Abou, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women*.

scientific or political factor caused the change. Instead, the findings suggest that the 2004 fatwa represents a significant reformulation of the relationship between astronomical knowledge, Islamic legal reasoning, and governmental authority.

The study contributes to scholarship on Islamic legal authority by examining the two fatwas through an integrated analytical framework that combines Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, Kuhn's account of paradigm change, and Abou El Fadl's theory of religious authority. This approach highlights the distinction between changes in the formulation of legal rulings and their broader institutional and social consequences. The ongoing differences in Indonesian calendrical practice indicate that the formal integration of *hisāb* and *ru'yat* and the clarification of governmental responsibility do not, by themselves, guarantee agreement among Islamic organizations. Calendar unification therefore requires attention not only to astronomical criteria but also to the interpretation of jurisprudential principles, the recognition of decision-making authority, and the procedures by which collective decisions are reached and accepted.

This study is limited to two MUI fatwas and relies on documentary analysis, without interviews with the actors involved in formulating them. As a result, it cannot fully reconstruct the historical evolution of the MUI's approach or determine the relative influence of scientific, institutional, and political factors. Future research should examine intervening MUI decisions, *ijtimā' ulamā* resolutions, and *ithbāt* session records, as well as interview representatives of the MUI, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, NU, and Muhammadiyah. This could clarify how changes in legal reasoning and astronomical criteria interact with institutional authority and community acceptance in ongoing efforts to unify the Hijri calendar in Indonesia.

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