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Same MABIMS Criteria, Different Decisions: A Comparative Study of Hijri Month Determination in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam

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Abstract

Determining the start of the Hijri month is a critical issue in astronomy because it relates to the observance of Islamic rituals. Although MABIMS member states have agreed on the "imkanur rukyat" criteria as a common guideline to harmonize the Hijri calendar, discrepancies in determining the start of the month still occur, including between Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, which share a common geographical location. These differences are influenced by the implementation of the criteria, institutional mechanisms, the rukyat verification process, and geographical conditions. This article presents a field study using a normative-empirical approach. Primary data were obtained through interviews with staff from the Astronomy Division of the Sarawak Mufti's Office in Malaysia, as well as staff from the Sharia Court and the Survey Department of Brunei Darussalam. Secondary data were sourced from regulations, crescent moon observation reports, astronomical literature, and official MABIMS documents. The data were analyzed descriptively, analytically, and comparatively using the burhani epistemological theory to assess the rationality, empirical observations, and scientific arguments in the application of the imkanur rukyat criteria. The research findings indicate that both Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam apply the 2021-revised MABIMS imkanur rukyat criteria through the integration of the hisab and rukyat methods, noting that Brunei places greater emphasis on the visibility of the crescent moon during observations on the 29th of each Hijri month. The differences lie in institutional structure, mechanisms for verifying rukyat results, and the management of observational data. An epistemological analysis based on burhani reasoning indicates that the application of these criteria is grounded in empirical evidence and rational astronomical considerations. Geographical factors, such as horizon conditions, atmospheric characteristics, and observation locations, also influence the likelihood of the crescent moon's visibility and the decision-making process. Despite technical and administrative differences, both countries remain committed to applying the imkanur rukyat

criteria in a scientific and sharia-compliant manner to support the harmonization of the Hijri calendar in the MABIMS region.

[Penentuan awal bulan Hijriah merupakan isu penting dalam ilmu falak karena berkaitan dengan pelaksanaan ibadah umat Islam. Meskipun negara-negara anggota MABIMS telah menyepakati kriteria imkanur rukyat sebagai pedoman bersama untuk mewujudkan harmonisasi kalender Hijriah. Namun, perbedaan penetapan awal bulan masih ditemukan, termasuk antara Malaysia dan Brunei Darussalam *yang memiliki lokasi geografis berdampingan*. Perbedaan tersebut dipengaruhi oleh implementasi kriteria, mekanisme kelembagaan, proses verifikasi rukyat, dan kondisi geografis. Artikel ini merupakan penelitian lapangan dengan pendekatan normatif empiris. Data primer diperoleh melalui wawancara dengan pegawai Bagian Falak Jabatan Mufti Sarawak, Malaysia, serta pegawai Mahkamah Syariah dan Jabatan Ukur Brunei Darussalam. Data sekunder berasal dari peraturan, laporan observasi hilal, literatur ilmu falak, dan dokumen resmi MABIMS. Data dianalisis secara deskriptif-analitis dan komparatif menggunakan teori epistemologi burhani untuk menilai rasionalitas, observasi empiris, dan argumentasi ilmiah dalam penerapan kriteria imkanur rukyat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Malaysia dan Brunei Darussalam sama-sama menerapkan kriteria imkanur rukyat MABIMS revisi 2021 melalui integrasi metode hisab dan rukyat, dengan catatan bahwa Brunei lebih mempertimbangkan keterlihatan hilal saat observasi pada tanggal 29 setiap bulan hijriah. Perbedaannya terletak pada struktur kelembagaan, mekanisme verifikasi hasil rukyat, dan pengelolaan data observasi. Analisis epistemologi burhani menunjukkan bahwa penerapan kriteria tersebut didasarkan pada pembuktian empiris dan pertimbangan astronomi yang rasional. Faktor geografis, seperti kondisi ufuk, karakter atmosfer, dan lokasi observasi, turut memengaruhi peluang keterlihatan hilal serta proses pengambilan keputusan. Meskipun terdapat perbedaan teknis dan administratif, kedua negara tetap berkomitmen menerapkan kriteria imkanur rukyat secara ilmiah dan syar'i untuk mendukung harmonisasi kalender Hijriah di kawasan MABIMS.]

Keywords: Imkan Rukyat MABIMS; Start of Hijri Month; Burhani Epistemology; Malaysia; Brunei Darussalam.

Introduction

Determining the beginning of the Hijri month holds a very strategic position in Islamic law because it serves as the basis for the performance of various collective acts of worship.[1] The text (nash) affirms that the lunar cycle serves as a guide for time for humanity and for the performance of the Hajj, as

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

mentioned in Surah al-Baqarah, verse 189.[2] Within Islamic tradition, various methods of interpreting the text have given rise to different practices; consequently, the determination of the times for acts of worship also varies. In practice, there are two main approaches used to determine the beginning of the Hijri month: the rukyat method, which involves directly observing the crescent moon after sunset on the 29th day of the Hijri month, and the hisab method, which utilizes modern astronomy for calculations by considering various parameters such as conjunction, the moon's altitude, elongation, and the moon's age.[3] In addition to these two approaches, a frequently debated issue is the criterion of the crescent's altitude, which determines whether the moon has entered a new phase or not. To bridge these two methods and criteria, the concept of "imkanur rukyah" was developed. This criterion serves as a scientific-sharia instrument that links the results of astronomical calculations with the likelihood of successfully observing the crescent in the field.[4]

The concept of "imkanur rukyat" has garnered significant attention in Southeast Asia through the MABIMS forum (Ministers of Religious Affairs of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore).[5] In 1992, MABIMS member countries agreed to use the imkanur rukyat criteria—specifically, an altitude of 2', an elongation of 3', and a lunar age of 8 hours after ijtimak—as a common guideline for determining the start of the Hijri month. These criteria were subsequently updated in 2021 to an altitude of 3' and an elongation of 6.4', based on advancements in observational data and modern astronomical studies.[6] The existence of the MABIMS Imkanur Rukyat criteria demonstrates that the issue of determining the start of the Hijri month is no longer merely a national concern but has evolved into a key agenda in achieving the harmonization of the Islamic calendar across Southeast Asia. The uniformity in determining the start of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah serves as one indicator of the successful implementation of these criteria.[7] Therefore, research on the application of the "imkanur rukyat"

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[2] Muhammad Hadi Bashori, *Pengantar Ilmu Falak: Pedoman Lengkap Tentang Teori Dan Praktik Hisab Rukyat, Arah Kiblat, Waktu Shalat, Awal Bulan Qamariah, Dan Gerhana* (Jakarta Timur: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2015).

[3] Susiknan Azhari, *Hisab Dan Rukyat: Wacana Untuk Membangun Kebersamaan Di Tengah Perbedaan* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2007).

[4] Susiknan Azhari, *Ilmu Falak: Praktik Hisab Rukyat Dan Aplikasinya* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2012).

[5] MABIMS, *Kriteria Imkanur Rukyat MABIMS (Revisi 2021)* (Bandar Seri Begawan: Sekretariat MABIMS, 2021).

[6] Farras Fathan Hikam, Ahmad Adib Rofiuddin, and Mohammad Zulfaiz Akbar bin Abdul Rahman, "An Examination of The Practical Implementation of The Neo MABIMS Criteria in the Determination of the New Islamic Month in Indonesia," SEAIS: *Journal of Southeast Asian Islam and Society* 4, no. 1 (2025): 39–60, https://doi.org/10.30631/knmk6b40.

[7] Mursyid Fikri et al., "The Harmonizing the Hijri Calendar: A Comparative Insight of Indonesia's Imkan Al-Ru'yah Crescent Visibility Criteria with Malaysia and Saudi Arabia,"

criteria is of high urgency, as it is directly related to efforts to unify the regional Hijri calendar—a shared aspiration of MABIMS member states.

Nevertheless, reality shows that applying the same criteria does not always lead to the same decisions regarding the determination of the start of the Hijri month. On several occasions, differences in the determination of the start of the Hijri month have still been observed among MABIMS member states.[8] This situation raises questions regarding the extent to which the "imkanur rukyat" criteria are consistently implemented by MABIMS member states, and whether there are other factors influencing the determination of the start of the month. In other words, the issue at hand no longer lies in the existence of the criteria, but in how these criteria are applied within the distinct geographical, administrative, and technical contexts of each country. Even more interestingly, Malaysia's proximity to countries such as Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam—which are also located in a nearly identical geographic zone—raises issues regarding the uniformity of determining the start of the lunar month at the regional level. Although they share nearly identical geographic and climatic characteristics, differences in the application of the imkanur rukyat criteria among these countries persist.[9] This indicates that, in addition to geographical factors, there are also influences from aspects of fiqh ijtihad, governmental principles, and differing epistemological approaches in determining the start of the month.

Academically, the study of imkanur rukyat remains an evolving area of debate. Some scholars argue that the criteria for imkanur rukyat currently in use are sufficiently representative to describe the likelihood of the crescent moon's visibility based on modern astronomical data.[10] Conversely, other researchers believe that the parameters used still need to be continuously evaluated because the success of rukyat is influenced not only by the crescent's altitude and elongation but also by atmospheric factors, humidity, observation location, the quality of observational instruments, and the geographical conditions of a region. This debate indicates that the

Mazahibuna: Jurnal Perbandingan Mazhab 7, no. 1 (2025): 38–53, https://doi.org/10.24252/mazahibuna.vi.51264.

[8] Moh Fadllur Rohman Karim and Mahsun Mahsun, "Kriteria Baru MABIMS 3-6, 4: Upaya Penyatuan Kalender Hijriah Di Indonesia Dalam Perspektif Maqāṣid Al-Syarī'ah," *Astroislamica: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* 3, no. 1 (2024): 51–75, https://doi.org/10.47766/astroislamica.v3i1.2735.

[9] Susiknan Azhari, *Ensiklopedi Hisab Rukyat*, n.d.

[10] Hikam, Rofiuddin, and Abdul Rahman, "An Examination of The Practical Implementation of The Neo MABIMS Criteria in the Determination of the New Islamic Month in Indonesia."

application of "imkanur rukyat" remains an open issue requiring further study, particularly in the context of its implementation at the national level.[11]

A review of the application of the imkanur rukyat principle in determining the start of the Hijri month reveals several key trends. First, a number of studies focus on institutional aspects and policy implementation at the national level. Sharifah Syazwani Syed Mohammed explains that Brunei Darussalam establishes rukyat as the primary legal basis, regulated by the Sharia Court Act -Penggal Sharia Court Act No. 184 with the support of official state institutions,[12] while the study by Achmad Mulyadi et al. shows that Malaysia centrally applies the MABIMS criteria through JAKIM, in contrast to Indonesia, which takes a more pluralistic approach by involving Islamic civil society organizations in the process of determining the start of the Hijri month.[13] Second, research on normative and fiqh foundations, such as that by Mohd Shukri Hanapi and Shahir Akram Hassan, confirms that Brunei views rukyat as the primary method based on sharia evidence, while hisab serves only as a supporting tool.[14] These findings align with the study by Muchammad Azkal Huda and Inayah, which indicates that the use of hisab and astronomical technology is acceptable as a form of ḥīlah syarʻiyyah that supports the achievement of maqāṣid al-syarīʻah; thus, the normative and scientific approaches are positioned as complementary rather than contradictory.[15]

Third, another research group discussed technological developments and astronomical criteria in the observation of the new moon. Mohammaddin

[11] Mualimin Mochammad Sahid et al., "Lunar Crescent Visibility Criteria in Determining the New Islamic Month in Malaysia," *Al-Hisab: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* 1, no. 4 (2024): 197–209, https://doi.org/10.33096/jah.v1i4.21764.

[12] Sharifah Syazwani Syed Mohamed and Ibnor Azli Ibrahim, "Definisi Rukyat Berdasarkan Analisis Kenampakan Hilal Ramadan Dan Syawal Di Negara Brunei Darussalam," *BITARA: International Journal of Civilizational Studies and Human Sciences* 6, no. 2 (2023): 185–200.

[13] Achmad Mulyadi et al., "Dynamics of Implementing the New MABIMS Criteria on the Hijri Calendar (Takwīm Hijri) By the Indonesian and Malaysian Governments," *Al-'Adalah* 22, no. 2 (2025): 381–408, https://doi.org/10.24042/adalah.v222.28543.

[14] Mohd Shukri Hanapi and Shahir Akram Hassan, "Basis for Using the Rukyah Method for Determining the Arrival of Ramadan and Syawal in Brunei Darussalam," *Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture* 3, no. 2 (2015): 13–22, https://doi.org/10.15640/jisc.v3n2a2.

[15] Muchammad Azkal Huda and Inayah, "Integrasi Taʿabbudī Dan Taʿaqqulī Melalui Ḥīlah Syarʿiyyah Dalam Ilmu Falak: Kontribusi Pada Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah," *El-Faqih: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Hukum Islam* 12, no. 1 (2026): 20–38, https://doi.org/10.58401/faqih.v12i1.2261.

Abdul Niri et al.[16] and Muhammad Rasywan Syarif et al.[17] both concluded that the use of telescopes, digital imaging, and astronomical technology can improve the accuracy and reliability of rukyat without undermining its Sharia legitimacy. On the other hand, Sharifah Syazwani Syed Mohammed, in her study on changes to the imkanur rukyat criteria in Malaysia, showed that revising the criteria from the old standards to the new ones actually sparked debate because the more lenient astronomical limits allow the crescent moon to be detected optically but do not necessarily meet the standards for natural visual visibility.[18] This debate is reinforced by Amar Ma'ruf's research, which states that Muhammadiyah rejects the new MABIMS criteria as the basis for determining the start of the month because they are considered empirical and heavily dependent on developments in crescent visibility data,[19] whereas Muhammad Ridzuan Hashim et al.[20] demonstrate that although MABIMS member states have agreed on new criteria—a minimum crescent altitude of 3° and an elongation of 6.4°—the unification of the Hijri calendar still faces obstacles due to differences in fiqh interpretations, the concept of maṭla', and administrative mechanisms in each country. Meanwhile, Mursyid Fikri noted that geographical factors, variations in astronomical calculations, and differing interpretations of the authority of ulil amri also influence the implementation of the criteria for crescent visibility in various countries.[21]

Based on the explanation above, it is clear that previous studies have extensively addressed the normative, astronomical, and technological aspects of imkanur rukyat, as well as its implementation, albeit in a piecemeal manner. However, there has not yet been a study that specifically compares the implementation of the post-2021 revised MABIMS criteria between Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam by integrating an analysis of geographical factors, institutional mechanisms, and the consistency of the criteria's application in the practice of determining the start of the Hijri month. This

[16] Mohammaddin Abdul Niri et al., "Kesan Penggunaan Hitungan Astronomi Dan Alatan Moden Dalam Cerapan Hilal Di Malaysia: Satu Penelitian," *Jurnal Fiqh* 9 (2012): 45–64, https://doi.org/10.22452/fiqh.vol9no1.3.

[17] Muhammad Rasywan Syarif et al., "The Transformation of Rukyah Al-Hilal: Integrating Digital Imaging Technology in Islamic Moon Sighting Practices," *Malaysian Journal of Syariah and Law* 13, no. 1 (2025): 314–24, https://doi.org/10.33102/mjsl.vol13no1.751.

[18] Mohamed and Ibrahim, "Definisi Rukyat Berdasarkan Analisis Kenampakan Hilal Ramadan Dan Syawal Di Negara Brunei Darussalam."

[19] A M A R Ma'ruf, "Pandangan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Terhadap Penetapan Kriteria MABIMS Baru Dalam Penentuan Awal Bulan Kamariah" (n.d.).

[20] Muhammad Ridzuan Hashim et al., "Unification of Hijri Calendar Under One Maṭla': A Case Study of MABIMS Through the Lens of Islamic Jurisprudence and Astronomy," *Jurnal Fiqh* 22, no. 2 (2025): 389–433, https://doi.org/10.22452/fiqh.vol22no2.7.

[21] Fikri et al., "The Harmonizing the Hijri Calendar: A Comparative Insight of Indonesia's Imkan Al-Ru'yah Crescent Visibility Criteria with Malaysia and Saudi Arabia."

gap constitutes the research gap and, at the same time, the main contribution of this study.

Literature Review

Malaysia is a country located in Southeast Asia, near the equator—specifically between 1° and 7° North Latitude (NL) and 100° and 119° East Longitude (EL).[22] This geographical location gives Malaysia a tropical climate characterized by relatively high temperatures throughout the year, high humidity, and rainfall influenced by the Northeast and Southwest monsoon winds. These climatic factors not only affect the social and economic lives of the people but also influence the field of astronomy, particularly in the observation of the crescent moon to determine the start of the Islamic lunar month.[23]

Malaysia's geographic location has a very significant impact on the visibility of the crescent moon. Malaysia's proximity to the equator results in a smaller angle of the ecliptic inclination (the Sun's annual apparent path across the celestial sphere) relative to the horizon at sunset.[24] This causes the crescent moon appearing after the conjunction to be at a low elevation on the western horizon, making visual observation difficult. Therefore, factors such as the crescent's altitude, the angular distance between the Sun and the Moon (elongation), and the duration the crescent remains above the horizon after sunset (lag time) are critical in determining whether the crescent can be seen or not.

In addition, atmospheric conditions in Malaysia—which are often characterized by thick clouds, haze, and high humidity—also pose an additional challenge to traditional rukyat methods. These conditions reduce the likelihood of directly sighting the crescent moon, even though astronomical calculations indicate that the crescent has already appeared above the horizon.[25] Consequently, the use of astronomical calculations and the application of the "imkanur rukyat" criteria have become imperative in the context of modern governance. These criteria enable the determination of the start of the month to be conducted more objectively by taking into account astronomical data that can be measured and verified.

Chronologically, the development of astronomy in the Malay Archipelago can be traced back to the arrival of Islam in the region around the 13th century.[26] In the early period, this field developed within traditional

[22] Jabatan Ukur dan Pemetaan Malaysia, *Geografi Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: JUPEM, 2020).

[23] Malaysia.

[24] Mohd Zambri Abdullah, *Ilmu Falak: Penentuan Arah Kiblat, Waktu Solat Dan Awal Bulan Hijri* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2009).

[25] Abdullah.

[26] Abdul Kadir Mat Salleh, *Sejarah Perkembangan Ilmu Falak Di Alam Melayu* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2005).

educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools (pondok) and madrasahs. Astronomy studies at that time were based on classical texts from the Middle East that emphasized the method of hisab taqribi (approximation) and the use of traditional tools such as the rubu‘ mujayyab.[27] Although basic in nature, this approach successfully met the religious needs of the Muslim community at that time.

Historically, the Malaysian states experienced discrepancies in determining the start of Ramadan 1403/1983 when the calculations on the 29th of Sha'ban 1403 AH did not meet the criteria followed by Malaysia, leading to differences in the start of Ramadan across various regions of the country. This prompted the Malaysian government to take the initiative to prevent such discrepancies from recurring by establishing the Committee for the Review of the Determination of the Beginnings of Ramadan and Shawwal."[28]

Toward the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, a significant shift occurred in the development of astronomy in this region with the emergence of reformist figures such as Sheikh Tahir Jalaluddin. He introduced a more systematic modern astronomical approach based on more precise mathematical calculations. His contributions through writing and education paved the way for reforms in the methods of determining prayer times and the direction of the qibla, thereby reducing reliance on traditional methods alone.[29]

Following Malaysia's independence in 1957, the development of Islamic astronomy entered a phase of institutionalization. The establishment of official bodies such as the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia and the state mufti offices has strengthened the role of Islamic astronomy in religious administration. During this period, methods for determining prayer times and the start of the Hijri month began to be standardized at the national level through the use of more precise astronomical data and uniform standards.

Subsequently, from the late 20th century into the 21st century, the science of astronomy in Malaysia experienced rapid development in tandem with technological advancements. The use of astronomical software, modern telescopes, the Global Positioning System (GPS), and the construction of observatories have improved the accuracy of observations and calculations. In the context of determining the start of the Hijri month, Malaysia has also played a significant role in introducing and adapting the "imkanur rukyat"

[27] Mat Salleh.

[28] Susiknan Azhari, *Merajut Kebersamaan Diskursus Penyatuan Kalendar Islam: Sebuah Autobiografi Akademik* (Yogyakarta, 2024).

[29] Mohd Zambri Zainuddin, *Tokoh Falak Nusantara: Sheikh Tahir Jalaluddin* (Kuala Lumpur: Akademi Pengajian Islam, 2010).

criteria at the regional level, particularly through cooperation among Southeast Asian nations.[30]

From an academic perspective, these developments are further supported by higher education institutions offering courses and research in the field of astronomy. This has produced local experts skilled in both Sharia and modern astronomy. However, these developments have also raised several critical issues, such as differing interpretations of astronomical criteria, the challenge of harmonization among states, and the need to raise public awareness of the importance of this field of study.

In short, in the early days, Malaysia used the rukyat method, which involves direct observation of the crescent moon immediately after sunset on the 29th day of each Hijri month. This method is based on Islamic legal principles derived from the Quran and hadith, which emphasize the importance of sighting the crescent moon as a sign of the beginning of the new lunar month. However, weather conditions, geographical location, and visibility limitations often posed challenges in ensuring the accuracy of these observations. With advancements in astronomy and astronomical technology, Malaysia began incorporating the hisab method—the mathematical and astronomical calculation of the positions of the moon and sun. However, in the early stages, hisab served only as a supplement to rukyat. A significant change occurred when Malaysia adopted the imkanur rukyat criteria in 1992—an approach that combines rukyat and hisab based on the concept of the moon's visibility.[31]

The Imkanur Rukyat criteria establish several astronomical parameters—such as the moon's altitude, angular distance (elongation), and lunar age—to determine whether the new moon is potentially visible. This approach not only enhances the accuracy of determining the start of the Hijri month but also helps ensure consistency in the Islamic calendar at the national and regional levels. Broadly speaking, the criteria for determining the start of the Hijri month in Malaysia reflect an ongoing effort to harmonize the requirements of Islamic law with advances in modern science. This approach is essential for ensuring consistency in the religious practices of Muslims and for strengthening a more systematic and authoritative Islamic calendar system.

Brunei Darussalam is located on the northern coast of the island of Borneo, at approximately 4°–5° north latitude and 114°–115° east longitude. The development of astronomy in Brunei Darussalam is inextricably linked to the history of Islamization and the royal system of government, which established religion as the foundation of society. Since the arrival of Islam

[30] Azhari, *Ensiklopedi Hisab Rukyat*.

[31] Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, *Kaedah Penentuan Awal Bulan Hijriah Di Malaysia* (Putrajaya: JAKIM, 2021).

around the 14th century, the need to determine times for religious observances such as prayer, fasting, and the Hajj has driven the application of the principles of astronomy, although in the early period this practice remained traditional and relied on direct observation of natural phenomena such as the sun's movement and the sighting of the new moon (rukyat).[32]

In the early period, the development of astronomy in Brunei was greatly influenced by networks of scholars from the Nusantara region and the Islamic world, particularly from the Sultanate of Malacca, the Sultanate of Johor, and centers of learning in the Middle East. Ulama and religious teachers played a vital role in imparting knowledge regarding the determination of prayer times, the direction of the qibla, and the Hijri calendar. However, the approaches used were still based on traditional hisab (basic calculations) and rukyat, without the support of modern astronomical instruments.

Prior to 1992, Brunei did not have an officially standardized Hijri calendar system at the national level. In daily life, people used two calendar systems simultaneously. The first was the Gregorian calendar, which was used for administrative, economic, and international affairs. The second was the Hijri calendar, used for religious observances, particularly to determine the start of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah. However, the determination of the start of the Hijri month at that time still relied heavily on decisions made by neighboring countries such as Malaysia or Singapore, as well as local sighting reports that were unsystematic and not yet standardized.[33] During this period, the sighting method was also more dominant than modern astronomical calculations. Moon sightings were conducted manually at specific locations, using basic tools such as simple binoculars or even the naked eye. The absence of a dedicated body to coordinate the field of astronomy resulted in the field's development being rather slow and lacking institutional structure.

Significant changes took place after 1992 when Brunei began taking steps to modernize its astronomical system and the determination of the Islamic calendar. These efforts were reinforced through the establishment of official institutions such as the Office of the Mufti of the Sultanate of Brunei, which plays a role in providing legal opinions and harmonizing issues related to Islamic astronomy. In addition, the government also began adopting more scientific calculation methods based on astronomical data and integrating them with visual observation within the framework of "imkanur rukyat."[34] Along with these developments, Brunei has also harmonized the

[32] Awang Haji Mohd Jamil Al-Sufri, *Tarsilah Brunei: Sejarah Awal Dan Perkembangan Islam* (Bandar Seri Begawan: Pusat Sejarah Brunei, 2002).

[33] Haji Muhammad Isa bin Ibrahim, *Falak Syar'i Dan Penentuan Awal Bulan Hijriah Di Brunei Darussalam* (Bandar Seri Begawan: Kementerian Hal Ehwal Ugama Brunei, 2018).

[34] Dato Hakim, Interview at Mahkamah Syariah Brunei.

determination of the start of the Hijri month through regional cooperation, particularly within the MABIMS forum (Ministers of Religious Affairs of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore). Through this cooperation, the "imkanur rukyat" criteria were introduced as a common standard for determining the visibility of the crescent moon, thereby leading to a more systematic and authoritative harmonization of the Hijri calendar in Brunei.[35]

Thus, overall, prior to 1992, the use of calendars in Brunei was characterized by a dual system of the Gregorian and Hijri calendars, without a solid, official harmonization system. Astronomy also developed traditionally under strong external influences and had not yet been fully institutionalized. It was only after that year that Brunei began to enter a phase of astronomical modernization with a more scientific, structured, and regionally collaborative approach, which ultimately strengthened the Islamic calendar system in the country.

The criteria for determining the start of the Hijri month in Brunei Darussalam are implemented based on a combination of the rukyat and hisab methods, harmonized under the guidelines of MABIMS member states. In this context, Brunei adopts the imkanur rukyat criterion as the primary basis for determining the start of the Hijri month, particularly for the months of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah.[36] These criteria are used to assess the likelihood of the crescent moon's visibility based on specific astronomical parameters such as the moon's altitude, the angular distance between the moon and the sun, and the moon's age at sunset. The implementation of these methods aims to ensure that the determination of the start of the month is conducted in a more systematic and scientific manner, in line with advancements in modern astronomy.[37]

In Brunei, the process of observing the crescent moon is carried out by religious authorities at rukyat sites designated by the government. Astronomical calculations are used first to determine the probability of the crescent's visibility before the rukyat process begins.[38] If the crescent is successfully sighted and meets the religious requirements, the start of the new month will be declared. However, if the crescent moon is not visible due to weather conditions or does not meet the established criteria, the current month will be completed to 30 days. This approach demonstrates that Brunei combines traditional and scientific elements in determining the Hijri calendar.

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[35] Hakim.

[36] Jasamad Bolhassan, "Pelaksanaan Imkan Al-Rukyat Di Negara-Negara MABIMS," *Jurnal Falak* 12, no. 2 (2020): 44.

[37] Dato Hakim, interview at Mahkamah Syariah Brunei.

[38] Kementerian Hal Ehwal Ugama Brunei, *Panduan Rukyat Anak Bulan Negara Brunei Darussalam* (Bandar Seri Begawan: Jabatan Syariah, 2019).

Furthermore, the use of the "imkanur rukyat" criteria in Brunei also reflects the country's efforts to achieve regional harmonization in determining the start of the Hijri month. This harmonization is crucial for reducing discrepancies in the dates of Islamic holidays among neighboring countries, particularly among MABIMS member states. Furthermore, the involvement of religious institutions and astronomical experts in the process of determining the start of the month helps strengthen the credibility of the decisions made by the government. Therefore, the criteria for determining the start of the Hijri month in Brunei not only serve as a technical astronomical guide but also function as a vital instrument in maintaining consistency in the observance of religious rituals and fostering harmony within the country's Muslim community.[39]

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design focused on library research and field research. In general, qualitative research is a procedure that generates descriptive data in the form of written texts, spoken words, or observable individual behavior, and this data is analyzed without the use of statistical techniques.[40] This study is descriptive-analytical in nature. The descriptive aspect is used to systematically describe the implementation of the imkanur rukyat criteria in determining the start of the Hijri month in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, covering institutional aspects, rukyat and hisab mechanisms, as well as the procedures for determining the start of the Hijri month applied in both countries. Through this description, the study aims to provide a clear picture of the implementation of the "imkanur rukyat" criteria in state practice. The analytical aspect is used to examine and evaluate the implementation of these criteria based on burhani epistemology. The analysis is conducted by examining the aspects of rationality, empirical evidence, and scientific arguments underlying the application of the imkanur rukyat criteria in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam. Additionally, this study is comparative in nature, comparing the similarities and differences in the implementation of the imkanur rukyat criteria in both countries, as well as the factors influencing their implementation in determining the start of the Hijri month.[41]

This study employs both normative and empirical approaches. The normative approach is used to examine legal provisions, concepts, and the fundamentals of Islamic law related to the imkanur rukyat criteria in Malaysia

[39] Azhari, *Hisab Dan Rukyat: Wacana Untuk Membangun Kebersamaan Di Tengah Perbedaan*.

[40] Syahrum Salim, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Konsep Dan Aplikasi Dalam Ilmu Sosial, Keagamaan Dan Pendidikan* (Bandung: Citapustaka Media, 2012).

[41] Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Bisnis: Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Kombinasi, Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2017).

and Brunei Darussalam. The study reviews various regulations, fatwas, official decisions, and relevant literature to understand the legal and theoretical foundations for the application of these criteria.[42] Meanwhile, the empirical approach was used to obtain field data on the implementation of the imkanur rukyat criteria in both countries. Empirical data were collected through field observations at the Miri Astronomical Center in Sarawak in collaboration with the Astronomy Division of the Sarawak Mufti's Office, as well as in Brunei Darussalam through the Sharia Court and the Department of Surveying. In addition, data was also obtained through interviews with parties involved in the process of determining the beginning of the Hijri month. Thus, this study not only examines the normative aspects but also analyzes their implementation in practice.

The interviews were conducted in person with informants who possess expertise and are involved in the implementation of imkanur rukyat in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam. The first informant was Ustaz Haji Razali bin Husaini, Head of the Astronomy Division at the Sarawak State Mufti's Office. The interview took place on February 17, 2026, at the Miri Astronomy Center in Sarawak to gather information regarding the implementation of the new moon sighting, the application of the "imkanur rukyat" criteria, and the rationale used in determining the start of the Hijri month in Sarawak. The second informant was Dato' Hakim of the Sharia Court of Brunei Darussalam. The interview was conducted on March 18, 2026, at the Sharia Court of Brunei Darussalam. This interview aimed to gather data on the mechanism for determining the start of the Hijri month, the application of the "imkanur rukyat" criteria, and the role of relevant institutions in the process of determining the start of the month in Brunei Darussalam.

The documentation method involved collecting various documents related to the research subject, such as regulations, official decisions, rukyat activity reports, photographs of activities, and other documents relevant to the implementation of imkanur rukyat in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam. The author also conducted field observations, which were documented as supporting data for the research. The first observation was conducted on February 17, 2026, at the Miri Astronomical Center in Sarawak, by participating in a crescent moon observation activity with the Astronomy Division of the Sarawak Mufti's Office. The second observation was carried out on March 19, 2026, at Tanjung Recreation Beach, Brunei Darussalam, by participating in a crescent moon sighting activity with the Brunei Darussalam Sharia Court and the Brunei Darussalam Survey Department. Documentation of these observations was used to strengthen the empirical data regarding the implementation of the imkanur rukyat criteria in both countries.

[42] Soerjono Soekanto, *Pengantar Penelitian Hukum* (Jakarta: UI Press, 1986).

The data obtained in this study were analyzed using qualitative analysis methods. The analysis was conducted on normative data sourced from legislation, fatwas, official decisions, scholarly literature, and documents related to the implementation of the imkanur rukyat criteria in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam. This data was then examined to understand the legal basis, concepts, and arguments underlying the application of the imkanur rukyat criteria in both countries. In addition, an analysis was also conducted on empirical data obtained through interviews, observations, and field documentation. Data from interviews with Ustaz Haji Razali bin Husaini, Head of the Astronomy Division at the Sarawak Mufti's Office, and Dato' Hakim of the Brunei Darussalam Sharia Court were then combined with observations of crescent moon sighting activities at the Miri Astronomy Center in Sarawak and Tanjung Batu Beach in Brunei Darussalam. This data was subsequently classified, presented, and interpreted to provide an overview of how the "imkanur rukyat" criteria are applied in practice.

Results

This article found that from a religious perspective, the determination of the start of the Hijri month in Malaysia has a clear basis in the Quran—specifically, Surah Al-Baqarah (2:189) and Surah Yunus (10:5)—as well as in the hadith. The first and second verses indicate that the moon's orbit around the Earth can serve as the basis for determining time in Islam, including the determination of the Hijri month. These verses instruct people to use hisab, or astronomical calculation, to understand the moon's orbit. In addition to the two verses mentioned above, there is a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that also serves as a primary basis for the rukyat principle, namely:

> "Fast when you sight the new moon (hilal), and break your fast (celebrate the holiday) when you sight it. If the new moon is obscured by clouds, then complete the month (of Sha'ban or Ramadan) to thirty days."

This hadith serves as the primary evidence for the use of the rukyat method in determining the start of the Hijri month. Based on this evidence, Malaysia initially used the rukyat method, which involves direct observation of the crescent moon immediately after sunset on the 29th day of the Hijri month. However, this method often faces challenges such as weather conditions and limited visibility. With the advancement of astronomy, the hisab method was introduced as a supplementary tool to improve the accuracy of the determination.

A significant development occurred when Malaysia adopted the imkanur rukyat criteria in 1992—an approach that combines rukyat and hisab based on the concept of the crescent moon's visibility. These criteria establish specific parameters—such as the moon's altitude, elongation, and

age—to determine the likelihood that the crescent moon can be sighted. This approach aligns with Islamic principles, which do not reject the use of astronomical calculations but rather recognize them as tools to aid in understanding natural phenomena. In conclusion, the criteria for determining the start of the Hijri month in Malaysia result from the integration of textual evidence (dalil naqli) and rational approaches (aqli). It reflects an effort to ensure accuracy, consistency, and validity in the observance of Islamic worship, in harmony with the requirements of Islamic law and the advancements of modern science.

The determination of the start of the Hijri month through the rukyat method in Brunei is based on strong evidence from the Quran and the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. In the context of Islamic law, rukyat is considered a fundamental method that has been used since the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, to determine the beginning of a new month, particularly Ramadan and Shawwal. Among the most important sources of evidence is the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad:

> "Fast when you sight the new moon, and break your fast (celebrate the holiday) when you sight it. If the new moon is obscured by clouds, then complete the month (of Sha'ban or Ramadan) to thirty days."

This hadith was narrated by Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim and serves as the strongest evidence for the legal establishment of the crescent moon sighting. The wording of the hadith indicates that the beginning of fasting and the festival are directly linked to the process of sighting the crescent moon. Scholars of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) regard this hadith as the primary basis for the principle that crescent moon sighting is the prescribed method for determining the start of the Hijri month. In addition, there is another hadith that reinforces the status of the new moon sighting as the method for determining the beginning of the month. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

> "Do not fast until you see the new moon, and do not break your fast (celebrate Eid) until you see it. If the new moon is obscured by clouds above you, then estimate the date."

This hadith narrated by Imam al-Bukhari indicates that rukyat is a primary requirement before any act of worship related to the Hijri month is performed. In the context of fiqh, the majority of scholars understand that the term "seeing" in the hadith refers to actual rukyat, while hisab is used as a supplementary method when necessary. Therefore, rukyat holds a very important position because it is rooted in the direct practice of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and his Companions. Evidence from the Quran also highlights the importance of the moon's cycle as a timekeeper for humanity. Allah, the Exalted, states in Surah al-Baqarah (2): 189. This verse explains that the appearance of the crescent moon serves as a marker of time

in human life and the performance of acts of worship. Exegetes explain that the moon's changing phases from one stage to the next constitute a religious guideline for determining the Hijri lunar calendar.[43] Therefore, the sighting of the crescent moon is not merely a traditional practice; rather, it is a method grounded in clear textual evidence from the Quran and the Sunnah.

This article also found that, based on astronomical data at sunset on May 17, 2026, the positions of the crescent moon in Malaysia and Brunei are essentially identical. In Malaysia, the crescent's altitude ranges from 5.0° to 6.5°, while in Brunei it ranges from 5.2° to 5.4°. The geocentric elongation of the Moon relative to the Sun in Malaysia is estimated to be 9.6°–10.5°, while in Brunei it ranges from 9.7° to 9.8°. The age of the Moon since the conjunction in both countries is relatively the same, at approximately 13.9–15.5 hours. Based on these parameters, the position of the crescent moon in both countries actually exceeds the MABIMS Imkanur Rukyat Criteria, which require a minimum crescent altitude of 3° and a minimum elongation of 6.4°. Although the crescent data from both countries tend to meet the criteria for the start of the month, in reality, the two countries set the beginning of Dhu al-Hijjah 1447 on different days. Malaysia set the 1st of Dhu al-Hijjah 1447 AH to coincide with May 18, 2026, as listed in the 2026 Gregorian Calendar.[44] Meanwhile, Brunei Darussalam, based on Brunei's official calendar, set the 1st of Dhu al-Hijjah 1447 to coincide with May 18, 2006.[45]

Malaysia uses the MABIMS criteria to determine the Hijri month, whereby the crescent moon is determined using the rukyat method—that is, by conducting observations on the 29th day of each Hijri month using telescopes and total stations—as well as the hisab falak method, in which crescent moon observation data is generated through the Astronomical Information System (AIM) for all observation stations and distributed by the Geodetic Surveying Division (BUG), JUPEM Headquarters, to JUPEM offices in each state. This data is then analyzed based on the Imkanur Rukyat criteria. The New Imkanur Rukyat (KIR) Criteria, launched by the Minister at the Prime Minister's Office (Religious Affairs) and effective as of 1 Muharram 1444 H, represent an improvement over the previous KIR. These criteria were formulated based on considerations of Sharia and science, namely that at sunset, the crescent's altitude must be no less than 3 degrees above the

[43] Ismā'īl ibn Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 1 (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyibah, 1999).

[44] https://www.muftiwp.gov.my/images/falak/takwim/tarikh_penting/Takwim_Hijri_Miladi_2026.pdf

[45] https://www.mora.gov.bn/Muat%20Turun%20Library/JPI/Kalendar/KALENDAR%20JPI%202026.pdf

horizon and the angular separation (elongation angle) between the Moon and the Sun must be no less than 6.4 degrees.[46]

Although Brunei also uses the MABIMS criteria, when determining the months of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah, Brunei relies more on the results of the moon sighting conducted on the 29th day of the previous month. Based on the results of the moon sighting on the 29th of Dhu al-Qi'dah 1447, Brunei has determined that the 1st of Dhu al-Hijjah 1447 falls on May 19, 2026. This decision was made following a moon-sighting session for the new moon of Dhu al-Hijjah 1447 at five locations: the Brunei and Muara districts at the Mutiara Exchange Building, Tungku Highway; Tanjung Batu Recreation Park, Kampung Sabun, Pekan Muara; and Bukit Agok, Jerudong.[47]

Analysis and Discussion

The difference in the determination of the start of Zulhijah 1447 AH between Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam in 2026 shows that the application of the imkanur rukyat criterion is not solely determined by the astronomical position of the crescent moon, but also by the determination mechanisms in effect in each country. Although the regions of Sabah and Sarawak in East Malaysia share the same matla'—both geographically and astronomically—with Brunei Darussalam due to their location on the island of Borneo, the determination of the start of the Hijri month still follows Malaysia's national decision, which applies to the entire country. From the perspective of burhani theory, this situation indicates that empirical data from hisab and rukyat do not stand alone but are analyzed and decided within the framework of the applicable authorities and administrative systems. Therefore, the difference in the start of Zulhijah 1447 H between Malaysia and Brunei reflects that the rationality of the Hijri calendar determination is not based solely on geographical proximity or the similarity of the matla', but also on the processes of verification, validation, and official decisions established by each country.

Based on the burhani theory, which emphasizes the principles of rationality, demonstration (proof), causality (cause and effect), and objectivity, the implementation of imkanur rukyat in Brunei Darussalam demonstrates a system for determining the start of the Hijri month that is built upon a combination of Sharia authority and a scientific approach. The use of the imkanur rukyat criteria, harmonized through MABIMS, indicates

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[46] https://www.kedah.gov.my/index.php/2026/05/17/hari-raya-aidiladha-1447h-disambut-pada-27-mei-2026/

[47] Kementerian Hal Ehwal Ugama Negara Brunei Darussalam, "Ketetapan 01 Zulhijjah 1447 Hijrah Dan Hari Raya Aidiladha Bagi Negara Brunei Darussalam Dan Acara Keagamaan Bagi Menunggu Hasil Merukyah Anak Bulan Zulhijjah 1447 Hijrah," 2026, https://www.mora.gov.bn/SitePages/Pengumuman.aspx?itemid=4727.

that Brunei no longer relies entirely on traditional rukyat but instead integrates modern astronomical data into the process of determining the start of the month. This approach aligns with the burhani epistemology, which requires the use of reason, empirical evidence, and systematic analysis to produce decisions that are scientifically and Sharia-compliant.

The process of determining the start of the Hijri month in Malaysia demonstrates the use of logical and systematic reasoning in understanding the phenomenon of the crescent moon's visibility. This is evident in the role of JAKIM, which provides astronomical calculations—such as the time of conjunction, the altitude of the crescent, elongation, and the duration the moon remains above the horizon—before a decision is made. The use of this data indicates that determining the start of the month does not rely solely on observational traditions but also takes into account scientific principles that can explain whether the crescent is likely to be visible or not.[48][49] From an implementation perspective, both Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam use an integrative approach that combines rukyat and hisab in determining the start of the Hijri month. Before crescent moon observation activities are conducted, hisab data is used to calculate the moon's position based on astronomical parameters such as the moon's age, the crescent's altitude, elongation, and the duration the moon remains above the horizon. This information is then used as a guide for conducting rukyat at designated official locations.

In determining the start of the Hijri month, both Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam use the "imkanur rukyat" criterion as the primary basis for assessing the visibility of the crescent moon. This criterion serves as a technical guideline for determining whether the crescent moon is potentially visible or not, based on established astronomical parameters. The use of the same criterion indicates that both countries follow a uniform methodological framework in their decision-making process.[50] From this perspective, the imkanur rukyat criterion serves as an instrument that links astronomical calculations with visual observation results, while simultaneously reducing subjectivity in the assessment of the crescent's visibility. With clear standards in place, the process of determining the start of the month can be conducted more systematically, consistently, and based on scientifically verifiable evidence. This similarity indicates that neither country relies solely on rukyat or hisab; rather, they integrate both to produce more accurate and reliable decisions. This approach also demonstrates an effort to reconcile sharia

[48] Abdullah, *Ilmu Falak: Penentuan Arah Kiblat, Waktu Solat Dan Awal Bulan Hijri*.

[49] Muhammad Ilyas, *A Modern Guide to Astronomical Calculations of Islamic Calendar*, n.d.

[50] MABIMS, *Kriteria Imkanur Rukyat MABIMS (Revisi 2021)*; Pejabat Mufti Wilayah Persekutuan, *Bayan Al-Falak Siri Ke-7: Penerimaan Kriteria Baharu Imkān Al-Ruk'yah Di Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Pejabat Mufti Wilayah Persekutuan, 2019).

requirements with advancements in modern astronomy without disregarding the legal principles established in Islam.

Another similarity is that both countries determine the start of the Hijri month by referring to the regional cooperation framework established through MABIMS. Through this platform, Malaysia and Brunei share astronomical data, results of crescent moon observations, developments in astronomical technology, and discussions regarding the criteria for crescent moon visibility. In practice, this cooperation helps both countries apply nearly identical standards in the process of determining the start of the month. This not only enhances methodological consistency but also reduces the likelihood of significant discrepancies in the determination of important Islamic dates among countries in the region. Therefore, MABIMS serves as a vital medium that supports a more harmonious and coordinated determination of the start of the Hijri month.

The final obvious similarity is the use of modern astronomical technology in determining the start of the Hijri month. Both Malaysia and Brunei utilize various modern equipment and applications—such as telescopes, digital cameras, imaging systems, astronomical software, and GPS technology—to support observational activities and the analysis of astronomical data.[51] In determining the start of the month, this technology helps improve the accuracy of calculations and the reliability of observational results compared to relying solely on visual observation. Furthermore, modern technology enables observational data to be recorded, stored, and analyzed more systematically for verification purposes and future reference. This similarity demonstrates that both countries recognize the importance of scientific and technological advancements as key elements in strengthening the accuracy and credibility of the process for determining the start of the Hijri month.

Some differences in the implementation of determining the start of the Hijri month between Malaysia and Brunei are explained below. In determining the start of the Hijri month, Malaysia uses a mechanism that involves coordination between the state and national levels. Crescent moon sightings are conducted at various official locations designated in each state and overseen by the State Mufti's Office together with the astronomers responsible for their respective regions. The observation results and reports obtained from the states are then compiled and coordinated by JAKIM before a final decision is made and announced.[52] In contrast, in Brunei Darussalam,

[51] Mohd Zambri Zainuddin, *Ilmu Falak Dan Aplikasinya Di Malaysia* (Nilai: Penerbit USIM, 2018); Jabatan Mufti Negeri Melaka, *Peranan Balai Cerap Al-Khawarizmi Dalam Observasi Hilal* (Melaka: Jabatan Mufti Negeri Melaka, 2017); Brunei, *Panduan Rukyat Anak Bulan Negara Brunei Darussalam*.

[52] Malaysia, *Kaedah Penentuan Awal Bulan Hijriah Di Malaysia*; Melaka, *Peranan Balai Cerap Al-Khawarizmi Dalam Observasi Hilal*.

the observation and coordination processes are carried out in a more centralized manner under the Ministry of Religious Affairs through the Office of the Royal Mufti and the Department of Islamic Astronomy. Therefore, the process in Malaysia involves coordination among various state and central institutions, whereas in Brunei, the process is carried out in a more centralized manner under a single national religious administration system.[53]

Another difference is that the process of validating the results of the crescent moon sighting in Malaysia is carried out directly by the State Mufti's Office, which participates in crescent moon observation activities alongside astronomical officials at official locations. After the observation is conducted, the reports and testimonies regarding the sighting are evaluated by the mufti's office based on Islamic legal requirements as well as astronomical calculations provided by JAKIM. Subsequently, these decisions are compiled and harmonized at the national level before being submitted to the relevant authorities for an official announcement. In standard practice, this process focuses on collaboration between astronomical institutions and religious administrative bodies without directly involving the Sharia Court in the validation of the crescent sighting decision. In contrast, in Brunei Darussalam, the process of validating the moon sighting has a broader scope because, in addition to involving the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Office of the Royal Mufti, the Sharia Court also plays a role in validating the testimony of moon sighting witnesses should the need arise or in the event of a dispute regarding the visibility of the crescent moon. The Sharia Court serves to assess the validity of witnesses and provide legal legitimacy to decisions related to determining the start of the Hijri month. This situation demonstrates that the process of determining the start of the month in Brunei is not only supported by administrative and technical astronomical mechanisms but also incorporates the judicial branch as a check-and-balance mechanism.

In Malaysia, the process of determining the start of the Hijri month focuses on aligning official observations at locations designated by religious authorities and using astronomical calculations provided by JAKIM.[54] This process is based on the "imkanur rukyat" criteria, which are applied uniformly throughout the country with the support of modern astronomical equipment and a network of official observation sites. The primary emphasis is placed on the uniformity of observation procedures, the provision of astronomical data, and the coordination of reports among states before a decision is announced at the national level. In contrast, the process in Brunei Darussalam places greater emphasis on the influence of geographical factors

[53] Brunei, *Panduan Rukyat Anak Bulan Negara Brunei Darussalam*; Awang Haji Mohd. Zain Haji Serudin, *Brunei Darussalam: Persejarahan Dan Perkembangannya* (Bandar Seri Begawan: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Brunei, 2015).

[54] Ustaz Razali bin Husaini, interview at Pusat Falak Miri.

and local atmospheric conditions in assessing the visibility of the crescent moon. In addition to using hisab and rukyat data, Brunei also takes into account factors such as horizon elevation, humidity levels, the presence of coastal aerosols, the time interval between sunset and moonset, and the suitability of observation sites based on local horizon conditions. The study data also indicate that Brunei proposes adjusting the imkanur rukyat parameters based on the country's latitude and geographical characteristics so that the assessment of the crescent moon's visibility better aligns with local realities.

Malaysia determines the start of the month through a network of rukyat observation sites spanning multiple states, supported by various state observatories and astronomical units. This system allows observations to be conducted simultaneously at multiple locations before the results are compiled for a final assessment. In contrast, Brunei conducts observations through official sites directly managed by the country's religious authorities. Although both countries use astronomical calculations and visual observations as the basis for their decisions, the process of reaching the final decision shows certain differences. In Malaysia, observation reports from the states are coordinated by JAKIM and presented to the relevant authorities before an official announcement is made. In Brunei, the results of rukyat and hisab are provided by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Office of the Royal Mufti to serve as the basis for advice to the Sultan, who holds the authority to declare the beginning of the Hijri month. These differences indirectly indicate that the implementation of the final decision in Brunei is more directly linked to the country's governmental institutions, whereas in Malaysia, the decision is made through a religious administrative mechanism involving coordination between the state and national levels.

Conclusion

Based on the results of a study comparing the implementation of imkanur rukyat in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, it can be concluded that the implementation of imkanur rukyat in both countries is based on a combination of the rukyat and hisab methods, using the imkanur rukyat criteria as the primary guide for determining the start of the Hijri month. In Malaysia, the process is coordinated by JAKIM in collaboration with the State Mufti's Office through a network of rukyat observation sites across the country and national-level coordination. Meanwhile, in Brunei Darussalam, the process is centrally managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs through the Office of the Royal Mufti and the Department of Islamic Astronomy, taking into account geographical factors and local atmospheric conditions when assessing the visibility of the crescent moon. Therefore, both countries practice a system grounded in Sharia and modern astronomy, yet differ in terms of implementation mechanisms and coordination. Based on a burhani

epistemological analysis, the implementation of imkanur rukyat in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam has applied the principles of rationality, proof, causality, and objectivity through the use of modern astronomical data, as well as the integration of hisab and rukyat in determining the start of the Hijri month. Both countries share similarities in their use of the MABIMS imkanur rukyat criteria, regional MABIMS cooperation, and the utilization of modern astronomical technology. However, there are differences in the mechanisms for coordinating observations, validating rukyat results, considering geographical factors, establishing observation networks, and making final decisions. Thus, although both countries use the same methodological framework, the process of determining the start of the Hijri month is adapted to each country's institutional structure and system of government.

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Generative AI Usage Statement

The author states that the use of AI in the preparation of this article was limited to assisting with the process of refining words and sentences

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