

**Negara, Ulama, dan Umat dalam Kontestasi Otoritas:
Genealogi dan Legitimasi Penentuan Hari Raya Islam
Kontemporer**

**The State, Ulama, and Ummah in the Contestation of
Authority:
Genealogy and Legitimacy in Determining
Contemporary Islamic Holidays**

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Abstrak: Di Indonesia, penetapan hari raya Islam tetap menjadi persoalan kontroversial yang melampaui perdebatan metodologis antara hisab dan rukyat. Berbeda dari studi terdahulu yang umumnya berhenti pada perbandingan teknis kedua metode tersebut, penelitian ini menawarkan kebaruan dengan mengintegrasikan tipologi otoritas Weberian dan genealogi kekuasaan Foucauldian untuk membongkar akar sosio-historis dan relasi kekuasaan di balik fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Penelitian ini menganalisis: (1) genealogi otoritas penetapan hari raya dalam tradisi Islam; (2) legitimasi negara, ulama, dan komunitas Muslim dalam Islam kontemporer; dan (3) faktor struktural pendorong fragmentasi otoritas. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan desain studi kepustakaan kritis dan analisis dokumen kritis dengan menganalisis dokumen institusional seperti pedoman hisab Muhammadiyah, pedoman rukyat NU, fatwa MUI, dan keputusan sidang isbat 2026. Tipologi Weber memetakan posisi masing-masing aktor, sementara genealogi Foucault melacak produksi historis otoritas keagamaan. Hasil menunjukkan otoritas keagamaan dibangun secara historis, tidak pernah monolitik, dan selalu diperdebatkan: masyarakat Muslim semakin otonom secara keagamaan, negara mengklaim legitimasi rasional-legal melalui sidang isbat, sedangkan ulama dan organisasi keagamaan mempertahankan legitimasi epistemik-tradisional. Fragmentasi otoritas merupakan keniscayaan struktural Islam modern yang menuntut dialog adaptif, bukan penyatuan ini merupakan sebuah pergeseran dari paradigma mencari kebenaran tunggal menuju pengelolaan pluralitas legitimasi keagamaan. Studi ini terbatas pada konteks Indonesia dan berbasis analisis dokumen, sehingga generalisasi ke konteks Muslim lain memerlukan penelitian lanjutan dengan data yang lebih luas.

Kata Kunci: Genealogi Otoritas; Legitimasi Keagamaan; Penetapan Hari Raya; Islam Kontemporer di Indonesia

Abstract: In Indonesia, the determination of Islamic holidays remains a controversial issue that goes beyond the methodological debate between hisab and rukyat. Unlike previous studies, which generally cease at a technical comparison of these two methods, this research offers a novel approach by integrating Weberian typology of authority and Foucauldian genealogy of power to uncover the

socio-historical roots and power relations behind the fragmentation of religious authority. This study analyzes: (1) the genealogy of authority in determining holiday dates within the Islamic tradition; (2) the legitimacy of the state, religious scholars, and Muslim communities in contemporary Islam; and (3) the structural factors driving the fragmentation of authority. The method used was qualitative, employing a critical literature review and critical document analysis by examining institutional documents such as Muhammadiyah's guidelines on hisab, NU's guidelines on rukyat, MUI fatwas, and the decisions of the 2026 isbat session. Weber's typology maps the position of each actor, while Foucault's genealogy traces the historical production of religious authority. The findings exhibit that religious authority has been historically constructed, has never been monolithic, and has always been contested: Muslim communities are becoming gradually religiously autonomous; the state claims rational-legal legitimacy through isbat proceedings; while ulama and religious organizations maintain epistemic-traditional legitimacy. The fragmentation of authority is a structural inevitability of modern Islam that demands adaptive dialogue rather than unification; this represents a shift from a paradigm of seeking a single truth toward the management of pluralistic religious legitimacy. This study is limited to the Indonesian context and is based on document analysis; therefore, generalizing to other Muslim contexts requires further research with a broader data set.

Keywords: Authority Genealogy; Religious Legitimacy; Holiday Determination; Contemporary Indonesian Islam

A. Introduction

Disagreements over the start of the Hijri year are not a new phenomenon in the contemporary Islamic world. This phenomenon occurs almost every year, particularly regarding the start of the months of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah. It is not limited to the local level but extends to various Muslim-majority countries, including Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country. Every year, millions of Muslims in Indonesia face a situation where there are two or more differing decisions regarding the start of fasting or the celebration of religious holidays. This situation affects social cohesion, relations between religious organizations, and public trust in state institutions and religious figures.¹ In a broader context, this difference illustrates one of the most evident forms of the fragmentation of religious authority in contemporary Islam. This phenomenon is referred to as a crisis of religious authority by modern Islamic scholars and is characterized by the decline of centralized authority and the emergence of various conflicting claims to truth.²

Previous studies regarding how to determine the beginning of the Hijri month have largely focused on methodological aspects; specifically, they have focused on comparing the methods of *hisab* and *rukyat*. Each of these two methods, of course, has its own epistemological foundation and religious legitimacy, and is rooted in the broad intellectual tradition of Islam.³ A number of studies in this field generally examine scientific accuracy, the validity of hadith arguments, and the possibility of integrating the two methods as a solution to the differences that recur every year.⁴ In addition, other studies have sought to explore plans to integrate a global Islamic calendar through agreements among Muslim countries and international astronomical consensus. The aim of these agreements is to minimize methodological debates by offering common stand-

ards based on modern science. At the national level, several studies have begun to examine the role of the state in the *isbat* proceedings as a formal legal mechanism for determining the start of the Hijri month. This includes assessing the consistency of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' decisions over the years.⁵ Although this study offers significant benefits, it focuses primarily on technical and procedural aspects. This raises a rather fundamental question: Who has the right to make such decisions? On what grounds of legitimacy are these decisions based? These issues have not yet received adequate attention in the existing literature.

Several international research studies have found that, in contemporary Islamic literature, the issue of religious authority can no longer be comprehended as monolithic. Khaled Abou El Fadl, for example, asserts that authority in modern Islam is contested, with various actors competing to claim the right to speak on behalf of Islamic tradition.⁶ Muhammad Qasim Zaman also noted that modern religious scholars not only uphold their traditional authority but also actively debate their role in an ever-changing environment shaped by the pressures of modernization and the country's democratic transition.⁷ In the context of Southeast Asia, and Indonesia in particular, recent research indicates that Islamic authority in Indonesia has undergone a significant transformation in the post-Reformation era, with the state, religious mass organizations, and civil society groups all contending for religious authority.⁸ A study by Islamic digital authorities also found the same pattern: as digital media evolves, the fragmentation of power is increasing, enabling non-traditional actors to serve as religious guides.⁹ In the context of determining the dates of religious holidays, there are at least three key actors involved in this process: the state, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the *isbat* deliberation mechanism; religious scholars and organizations such as Muhammadiyah, which uses the *hisab* method, and Nahdlatul Ulama, which uses the *rukyyat*

method; and the faithful, who actively decide and even construct the authorities they recognize.

Based on the literature review above, at least three significant research gaps can be identified that have not been adequately addressed by previous studies. First, there are almost no studies that explicitly analyze the determination of holidays as an arena of contestation over the legitimacy of power, rather than merely a matter of methodological debate. Most current research treats these differences as technical issues that can be resolved through standardization. However, they do not comprehensively consider the underlying power structures. Second, studies highlighting the state's role in determining religious holidays largely still position the state as a neutral arbitrator, without critically examining how the state's own legitimacy is challenged and delegitimized by other parties within the religious public sphere.¹⁰ Third, no research has yet systematically employed a critical social theory framework to understand the historical and sociological dynamics of this phenomenon. Yet the phenomenon of determining religious holidays is closely associated to a crisis of authority and the growing role of individuals in choosing their religious practices.¹¹ Therefore, these three gaps open the door to research that is not only descriptive but also theoretical and critical. Thus, this research can contribute to the broader development of contemporary Islamic studies.

In an effort to address these differences, this study employs an analytical framework that deliberately links two interrelated traditions of social theory. First, Foucault's genealogical approach is used to trace how authority in the determination of religious holidays has been formed, shifted, and reproduced through power relations throughout the history of Islam.¹² For Foucault, truth is never neutral; it always stems from power-knowledge relations. In other words, the claim that a particular approach to determining religious holidays is religiously valid cannot be separated from

the question of who has the authority to define that validity and in what context that definition arises. Second, Max Weber's typology, namely, traditional, legal-rational, and charismatic authority is used as a sociological framework to map the positions and claims of each actor; the state claims legal-rational authority, while religious scholars build authority through tradition and scholarly charisma. Meanwhile, the faithful serve as the arena for negotiation among these various claims. The novelty of this study lies in the synthesis of these two frameworks within the context of determining religious holidays, a combination that, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, has never been systematically applied in the disciplines of Islamic astronomy and Indonesian Islamic studies. This synthesis enables an analysis that not only explains what happens, but also why and through what mechanisms it occurs and is supported.

This study employs a sociological-phenomenological approach using qualitative methods grounded in a critical paradigm, as it aims to uncover the power relations and structures of legitimacy underlying the determination of religious holidays in contemporary Islam, rather than merely describing them.¹³ The research design consists of a critical literature review combined with critical document analysis of institutional documents, the Muhammadiyah *hisab* guidelines, the PBNU Lajnah Falakiah rukyat guidelines, MUI Fatwa No. 2 of 2004, classical *fiqh* texts, and the 2026 *isbat* session decision—which are treated as sociological evidence of the formation of religious authority, not merely as linguistic texts;¹⁴ primary data consists of these documents, while secondary data comprises theoretical books and indexed journal articles. The analysis was conducted in three stages in accordance with the research question: a genealogical analysis to trace the historical formation of authority from the classical to the contemporary era;¹⁵ a Weberian typological analysis that maps the claims to legitimacy of the state,

religious scholars, and the faithful into traditional, legal-rational, and charismatic typologies based on institutional documentary evidence;¹⁶ and a critical sociology of religion analysis to identify the structural-historical factors causing the fragmentation of authority and its implications, using the frameworks of the decentralization of authority and Islamic legal pluralism and pluralism in Islamic law.¹⁷ The validity of the data is ensured through source triangulation (government documents, civil society organization documents, and academic literature) , with all documents being public and openly accessible.¹⁸

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of contemporary Islamic studies by broadening our understanding of the relationship between religion, power, and society in democratic Muslim countries, as well as to the sociology of religion through the application of Foucauldian genealogical methodology to actual religious practices. Practically, these findings are expected to provide input for policymakers in designing more inclusive and participatory mechanisms for determining religious holidays. The patterns of contestation over authority in Indonesia can also serve as a comparative mirror for other Muslim countries facing similar fragmentation. This is relevant given that Indonesia is often regarded as the world's laboratory for Islamic democracy.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to: (1) explain the genealogy of authority in determining religious holidays in Islamic tradition from a Foucauldian perspective; (2) analyze the legitimacy of the main actors, the state, religious scholars, and the faithful, in determining religious holidays in the Indonesian context using Weberian typology; and (3) identify the structural and historical factors driving the fragmentation of authority in the practice of determining religious holidays in Indonesia. The research questions guiding this study are: (1) How has the genealogy of religious authority in determining religious holidays been formed and evolved

within Islamic tradition? (2) Who possesses and can claim legitimacy in determining religious holidays within the context of contemporary Indonesian Islam? (3) Why has the fragmentation of authority occurred in the practice of determining religious holidays in Indonesia, and what are its socio-political implications?

B. Result and Discussion

1. The Genealogy of the Authority for Determining Religious Holidays in the Islamic Traditions

Genealogical examination of the authority behind the determination of religious holidays reveals that religiosity in Islam is not a static entity, but rather the result of a historical construction that continues to evolve alongside transformations in social, political, and epistemological contexts. Viewed through a Foucauldian framework, authority does not stem from an unchanging, inherent quality. Rather, it transpires from the relationship between power and knowledge, which shifts from one phase to the next; this challenges the assumption that there exists a single “correct” and unchanging model of religious authority in Islam.¹⁹ The fragmentation of authority evident today is not the result of a linear shift from “centralization” toward “decentralization,” but rather the outcome of a multi-layered shift in power-knowledge relations: at the political-symbolic level, the classical caliphate did indeed present a single reference point for authority; however, at the epistemic-practical level, namely, who has the authority to justify the sighting of the new moon, authority has always been local and personal, as demonstrated in the following section.²⁰ It is this discontinuity at the epistemic-practical level, not merely chronological periodization, that is the focus of the genealogical inquiry in this section.

Drawing on the Foucauldian genealogical framework, this inquiry is not intended merely to delineate historical periods, but

rather to demonstrate: (1) how the determination of religious holidays began to be framed as an “issue” requiring an authoritative resolution; (2) the discontinuities and changes in the rules governing the formation of religious truth in each phase; (3) the institutions, procedures, categories, and technologies that produce this authority; (4) the parties included in or excluded from legitimate authority; and (5) the accompanying mechanisms of normalization and resistance. These five aspects are examined in each of the following phases, drawing on primary archival artifacts.

In the classical era, religious authority was predominantly held by the ulama as the guardians of Islamic scholarly tradition. In determining the start of the Hijri month, the *rukyyat* method was used as the primary tool, considered consistent with the normative texts of the Prophet’s hadith. Scholars served as both epistemic and practical authorities in determining the validity of *rukyyat*, so religious legitimacy was both local and personal, as it depended heavily on the individual who witnessed the crescent moon.²¹ From Weber’s typological perspective, this pattern illustrates the existence of a form of domination known as traditional authority that is, an authority derived from the sanctity of traditions passed down through generations and embodied by figures considered to have inherited prophetic legitimacy.²² Scholars of this era were not merely well-versed in *fiqh*, but also held a monopoly on the interpretation of natural signs as a source of religious legitimacy. This is reflected in various references to classical fiqh texts such as *Al-Umm*, *Fath al-Qarib*, and *Al-Fiqh al-Islam wa Adillatuhu*, which establish the sighting of the crescent moon by a trustworthy person (*‘adl*) as a condition for the validity of determining the beginning of the month; this provides an understanding of a model of personal authority that is highly localized and decentralized. The issue of determining the date of religious holidays at this stage was initially established as the domain of religious scholars precisely because

of the *zanni* (presumptive) nature of the crescent moon sighting, which requires specially qualified assessors; this requirement of *‘adl* implicitly excludes anyone outside the circle of *fiqh* scholars and trusted witnesses from the legitimization process, so that religious authority at this stage simultaneously functions as a mechanism of social exclusion.

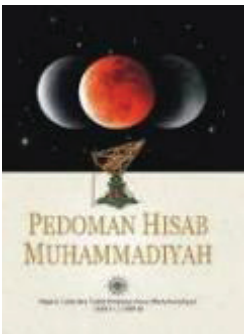
Table 1: The Tradition of Classical Fiqh as the Basis of Scholarly Authority

Source	<i>Al-Umm, Fath al-Qarib, and Al-Fiqh al-Islam wa Adil-latuhu</i>
Relevance:	All three texts stipulate that the beginning of the Hijri month is determined based on the sighting of the crescent moon by witnesses who meet the criterion of <i>‘adl</i> (just/trustworthy), indicating the historical authority inherent in local scholars as an embodiment of Weberian traditional authority.
Implication:	This configuration explains why NU upholds <i>rukyyat bil fi’li</i> as a continuation of the tradition of the personal authority of the ulama

At the dawn of the modern era, advances in astronomy introduced the *hisab* method as a significant epistemological alternative. The emergence of the *hisab* method not only brought scientific accuracy but also shifted the paradigm from empirical observation toward mathematical rationality. From a genealogical perspective, this shift marked a change in the relationship between knowledge and power, where authority was no longer entirely monopolized by traditional scholars but began to be induced by standardized scientific authority. The emergence of the *hisab* method, institutionalized by Muhammadiyah through the concept of *hisab hakiki wujudul hal*, serves as clear evidence of a shift in authority from empirical experience toward scientific rationality. This represents

an epistemological transformation which, in Weber's terms, constitutes an early form of the rationalization of religious authority.²³ The conflict between the *hisab* method and the *rukyat* method is thus not merely a methodological issue, but a manifestation of a shift in the structure of religious authority. Muhammadiyah's institutionalization of *hisab* also served as a new normalization mechanism, whereby scientific-calculative standards replaced individual testimony as the valid measure of truth; this mechanism subsequently incited epistemic resistance from those who continued to uphold *rukyat* as the sole valid evidence.

Table 2. Muhammadiyah Guidelines for Astronomical Calculations

Source:	
	Pedoman Hisab Muhammadiyah, Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 2009
Key Content:	The criteria for determining the beginning of the month using the <i>hisab hakiki wujudul hilal</i> method are as follows: the month is considered to have begun if the conjunction occurs before sunset and the moon sets after the sun.
Relevance:	Institutional artifacts that demonstrate that Muhammadiyah builds epistemic authority based on scientific rationality, rather than empirical evidence.

Implications: Muhammadiyah's consistent use of this document demonstrates that epistemic legitimacy can prevail over the state's legal-rational legitimacy within certain communities.

It should be emphasized that Table 2 presents the criteria for the visibility of the crescent moon as formulated in 2009, whereas the official determination of 1 Shawwal 1447 AH (2026) no longer relies on those criteria, but rather on the Single Global Hijri Calendar (KHGT) resulting from the 32nd National Tarjih Conference of Muhammadiyah (minimum elongation of 8° and minimum crescent altitude of 5° globally). This shift from the *wujudul hilal* criteria to the KHGT actually strengthens, rather than weakens, the genealogical framework of this section: it explains that Muhammadiyah's own epistemic authority continues to undergo internal transformation and is not a static entity that has remained unchanged since 2009.

This phenomenon is exacerbated by the emergence of various religious groups with differing interpretations, ranging from textualists who prioritize *rukyyat* to contextualists who lean toward *hisab* thereby creating variations in the timing of celebrations that confuse the public.²⁴ This situation indicates that fatwas issued by religious scholars, although they represent a Sharia-based effort, may be disregarded by some members of the public if they do not align with their preferences,²⁵ signaling the early stages of a more systematic fragmentation.

In the era of the modern nation-state, particularly in the Indonesian context, the state began to play a significant role in determining religious holidays through a mechanism known as the *isbat* session. The state's involvement through the Ministry of Religious Affairs signifies the institutionalization of religious authority within the framework of the nation-state, marking a shift in authority from the personal authority of religious scholars to a standardized

institutional authority.²⁶ In Weberian theory, this phenomenon is a manifestation of legal-rational authority, in which legitimacy no longer rests exclusively on tradition or personal charisma, but also on formal procedures, the legal system, and modern bureaucratic mechanisms.²⁷ The *isbat* hearing process, which involves astronomers, representatives of Islamic organizations, and government officials, reflects a model of religious governance based on formal consensus that is characteristic of the modern era. The *isbat* session thus serves as a state normalization mechanism to unify authority that had been fragmented since earlier phases; however, as shown in Table 3, this mechanism also leaves room for resistance from groups that choose to adhere to their own sources of authority outside of state decisions.

Table 3: Record of Decisions from the 2026 Isbat Hearing of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs

Source:



Decision of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia on the Determination of the First Day of Ramadan and the First Day of Shawwal, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia 2026

The phenomenon observed:	• Based on astronomical calculations and the absence of any sighting reports, it has been agreed that 1 Shawwal 1447 AH falls on Saturday, March 21, 2026 • The Ministry of Religious Affairs' decision ≠ Muhammadiyah's decision • There are three different dates for Eid al-Fitr (Government/NU, Muhammadiyah, and the Salafi Shafi'i community of Suger Kidul Village, Jember) • The meeting gathered many organizations, but the decision is not always universally implemented.
Relevance:	This track record serves as empirical evidence that the state's legal-rational legitimacy has never been the sole universally accepted authority, while also explaining who holds legitimacy and the causes of fragmentation.

In the contemporary era, the undeniable advancements in information technology and the growing individual awareness of religion among the public have driven the further development of the pluralization of religious authority. Individuals now have easy access to a wide range of religious perspectives from various sources, including traditional religious scholars, modern intellectuals, and digital influencers, which can strengthen the autonomy of the faithful in determining their methodological affiliations.²⁸ This phenomenon indicates that religious authority is no longer hegemonic but is distributed among the state, religious scholars with their various affiliations, and the faithful, who act as active agents in constructing recognized authority.²⁹ From the perspective of the genealogy

of power, this phenomenon aligns with Foucault's thesis that power is not concentrated at a single point, but rather dispersed across a network of constantly evolving relationships. At this stage, the mechanism of a single source of normalization whether personal, scientific, or state-sanctioned, that can no longer be sustained; the entry of new actors, such as digital influencers, into the sphere of authority has, in fact, become a form of resistance against efforts by the state and established civil society organizations to establish a single source of authority.

This genealogical analysis shows that, from the very beginning, the practice of determining religious holidays has never been separate from the social contest and the power dynamics surrounding it. However, this is not a linear evolution from centralization to decentralization, each phase has its own logic of authority production, with discontinuity rather than continuity as its defining feature. Each historical period presents a different form of authority: local religious scholars in the classical era, science-oriented modernist movements in the early modern era, bureaucratic nation-states in the post-independence era, and plural digital figures in the contemporary era. These manifestations are not merely technical changes, but fundamental expressions of who has the right to define religious truth and through what mechanisms.

2. Legitimacy of Authority: The State, Ulama, or Ummah

An analysis of the legitimacy of authority in determining religious holidays reveals a complex contestation among three main actors namely, the state, religious scholars, and the faithful that does not unfold in a linear or hierarchical manner, but rather within a network of relationships that mutually influence and challenge one another; through the lens of Weberian typology, each actor possesses a distinct basis of legitimacy that cannot be fully reduced to the others. Of the four Weberian ideal types which are tradi-

tional, legal-rational, charismatic, and value-based authority. The data from this study do not reveal a renowned charismatic pattern; the influential religious figures in the data are better understood as personifications of traditional or institutional epistemic authority, rather than personal charisma that exists independently of institutional structures.

The state, through the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, claims legal-rational authority over the determination of the start of the Hijri month through the formal procedure of the *isbat* hearing, which involves religious scholars and astronomers.³⁰ this involvement is not merely administrative facilitation but a concrete form of the state’s production of religious authority, in which decisions derive their legitimacy through systematic procedures, multiple actors, and the national regulatory framework. This phenomenon demonstrates that the state actively constructs and institutionalizes religious authority within a legal-rational framework, such that religious truth no longer springs solely from the traditions of religious scholars but also from modern bureaucratic mechanisms.³¹ However, the state’s legal-rational legitimacy is not conclusive. The record of the 2026 *isbat* hearing shows that Muhammadiyah has repeatedly disregarded its decisions, consistently relying on *hisab* because it questions the scientific standards or competence of the Minister of Religious Affairs as *uli al-amr* in matters of astronomy.³² In line with Turtz’s argument that bureaucratic legitimacy requires more than formal procedures; it also requires recognition from the communities it serves.

Table 4: MUI Fatwa No. 2 of 2004 on the Determination of the Beginnings of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah in line with Turtz’s argument

Source	Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) No. 2 of 2004
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- Key Content:
1. The fatwa stipulates that:
 2. The determination of the start of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah shall be made based on the *rukyat* and *hisab* methods by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, specifically the Minister of Religious Affairs, and shall apply nationwide.
 3. All Muslims in Indonesia are required to comply with the Government of the Republic of Indonesia's decision regarding the determination of the start of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah.
 4. In determining the start of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah, the Minister of Religious Affairs must consult with the Indonesian Ulama Council, Islamic mass organizations, and relevant agencies.
 5. The results of the moon sighting from regions where the crescent moon can be observed, even if outside the territory of Indonesia but with the same *mathla'* as Indonesia, may be used as a guideline by the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.
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Relevance: Although the fatwa mandates obedience to the government, Muhammadiyah does not accept it as binding because it questions the Minister of Religious Affairs' technical competence as *uli al-amr* in astronomical calculations

Implications: This fatwa failed to serve as a unifying force because it drew its legitimacy solely from one source (the state), thereby reinforcing the argument that a crisis of legitimacy is a matter of which framework is considered valid, not a matter of truth.

On the other hand, religious scholars and organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah derive their legitimacy from scholarly traditions and epistemic authority. NU tends to question the method of *rukyat bil fi'li* as a representation of tradition, a model of traditional authority that grounds claim of truth in the continuity of empirical practice and scholarly lineage. Muhammadiyah, on the other hand, adopts *hisab* as a modern rational approach that prioritizes scientific certainty. However, this use of scientific rationality does not in and of itself make Muhammadiyah an example of legal-rational authority in Weber's sense; its legitimacy derives more appropriately from scientific competence, institutional history, collective leadership, and the trust of its members. This difference demonstrates that the legitimacy of religious scholars is not singular, but rather plural and diverse according to their respective epistemological approaches.³³

Table 5: Nahdlatul Ulama Guidelines on Rukyat and Hisab
(PBNU Astronomical Committee)

Source	Nahdlatul Ulama Guidelines for Rukyah and Hisab, Astronomical Committee of the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Executive Board, Jakarta
Key Content:	This document confirms that NU uses <i>rukyat bil fi'li</i> (direct observation of the crescent moon) as its primary method, with <i>hisab</i> serving only as an auxiliary tool (<i>imkan al-rukyat</i>). The criteria of a minimum crescent moon lag of 2° with an elongation of 3° (old MABIMS standards) were updated in 2022 to 3° with an elongation of 6.4°.
Relevance:	NU builds its legitimacy through the continuity of tradition: <i>rukyat</i> is considered a form of worship (<i>'ubudiyah</i>) with a social and communal dimension, not merely a technical astronomical practice

Implication: The differences between the guidelines of NU and Muhammadiyah are a textual manifestation of the differences in their bases of legitimacy.

The existence of the Nadhlatul Ulama Bahtsul Masail Committee as a forum for collective *ijtihad* exemplifies the third model: collegial authority that does not depend on a single figure or state procedures, but rather on serious academic deliberation (*musyawarah*) within an organized community of scholars.³⁴ Collective decisions, whether of a Qauliy, Ilhaqiy, or Manhajiy nature, possess their own legitimacy or mimic that of state bureaucracy. This is a form of authority that relies on scholarly networks, historical precedents, and community trust, a form of symbolic capital in the Bourdieusian sense, encoded through *pesantren* institutions and graduate networks.

At the level of the faithful as religious subjects, the most complex dynamics are found. In the digital age, the faithful have broad access to religious information from various sources, ranging from formal institutions to social media influencers, allowing them to compare various opinions and choose the authority they deem most appropriate. This phenomenon reflects the emergence of individual religious authority, where legitimacy is no longer determined solely by formal institutions or religious scholars, but also by individual preferences and identity affiliations. Technological advancements and globalization have fueled the rise of religious individualism, which has eroded the monopoly of traditional authority, thereby granting believers greater autonomy in determining their religious references.³⁵ It should be emphasized that this phenomenon does not mean that the faithful have become a new type of authority in the Weberian sense; rather, they are best understood as an audience that grants or withholds recognition, as subjects who choose among competing claims to authority, and as a network of accept-

ance, compliance, and resistance to those authorities.

At the practical level, the contestation among these three actors is clearly evident in the practice of determining religious holidays in Indonesia. In recent years, discrepancies in the determination of Eid al-Fitr between the government and Muhammadiyah, or between NU and the government, particularly when the crescent moon's visibility reaches a critical point, have become a recurring phenomenon. In the digital age, this discourse has even spread to social media, where the debate between supporters of *hisab* and *rukyat* has become increasingly open and participatory, while at the same time becoming increasingly difficult for any authority to control.³⁶ The contestation among the state, religious scholars, and the faithful demonstrates that no single actor possesses absolute legitimacy in determining the date of religious holidays. Each actor possesses a distinct basis of legitimacy, legal-rational, traditional-epistemic, and individual-autonomous, meanwhile, the faithful function not as holders of an equal basis of legitimacy, but rather as an audience that grants recognition and as a network of compliance and resistance that helps determine the acceptance of these authorities in practice. This finding reinforces the argument that the determination of religious holidays is an arena of contestation over religious authority, not merely a technical methodological issue.

3. Fragmentation of Authority and the Crisis of Legitimacy in Contemporary Islam

The fragmentation of authority in determining religious holidays is a logical consequence of epistemological pluralism and the decentralization of power in contemporary Islam, exacerbated by the public's widespread access to various religious viewpoints through mass media and social media, which allows individuals to be more selective in choosing relevant authorities,³⁷ as well as

the emergence of religious influencers who challenge established scholarly authority through populist approaches lacking rigorous scholarly verification. Based on a document analysis, there are at least three structural factors driving this fragmentation; first, institutionalized epistemological inequality, in which the differences between *hisab* and *rukyyat* reflect two distinct paradigms of knowledge—the Muhammadiyah Hisab Guidelines are rational-scientific in nature, while the NU Rukyyat Guidelines are empirical-traditional in nature—each of which is difficult to reconcile without compromising the integrity of one of them, and this dispute is further exacerbated by social media, which allows diverse interpretations to gain popularity and challenge established academic consensus,³⁸ as is also evident in the paradigm differences between traditional *pesantren* and state-run Islamic educational institutions, which give rise to differing *fiqh* interpretations regarding the determination of the beginning of the month.³⁹

These institutionalized methodological differences, both within Islamic boarding schools and state-run Islamic higher education institutions, play a significant role in the ongoing challenge of establishing a unified religious authority in Indonesia.⁴⁰ More broadly, globalization and digitalization have paved the way for the emergence of new authorities outside traditional structures, such as online clerics, religious influencers, and virtual communities. The expansion of religious discourse beyond these traditional gatekeepers further complicates efforts to reach consensus, as various digital platforms facilitate the spread of interpretations that sometimes undermine the authority of established religious institutions.⁴¹

Second, the limitations of legal-rational authority. The differences that recur every year are not merely the result of differences in the *hisab-rukyyat* methods, but rather a manifestation of a deeper crisis of legitimacy within religious authority—where there is no

single, universally recognized authority, leading to a plurality of decisions, each of which is claimed to be religiously valid.⁴² The record of the 2026 *isbat* hearing serves as an example: the state's formal mechanism failed to serve as a unifying force because it represented only one basis of legitimacy (legal-rational) that was not recognized by epistemically or traditionally based communities. Even MUI Fatwa No. 2/2004, which mandates compliance with the government, has been unable to achieve consensus for similar reasons.⁴³ From the perspective of Foucauldian genealogy of power, this situation actually reveals the true nature of power: it is never monolithic, but rather an arena of struggle and negotiation among competing discourses.

Third, digital amplification is accelerating decentralization. This fragmentation of authority in the Indonesian context is further reinforced by unique structural and historical factors. Following the 1998 Reform era, political decentralization created space for religious expression. This coincided with the digital age, which enables every religious group to disseminate its views directly to the public without passing through institutional filters. This situation results in what Turhan This is referred to as the hyper-pluralism of religious authority, a situation in which plurality no longer exists merely between institutions, but also within each institution itself.

Public reactions have also been varied, some follow the government in the interest of national unity, some adhere to the decisions of mass organizations, and others follow global decisions such as those of Saudi Arabia or certain online clerics, indicating a shift toward a more fluid authority structure based on individual preferences. Within this framework, there has been a transition from a model of "authority as hierarchy" to "authority as network," in which authority no longer flows linearly from the top down but is instead distributed across a complex network of actors. The real-world case of differing determinations of Eid al-Fitr in Indonesia,

particularly in years when the position of the crescent moon is at a critical point, resulting in discrepancies between the *hisab* and *rukyat* methods, clearly demonstrates that the plurality unifying the determination of the holiday is not solely due to methodological differences, but rather to epistemological pluralism, institutional competence, and the increasing autonomy of individuals in determining religious practices. This decentralization, amplified by social media, has led to a proliferation of religious interpretations, thereby challenging the traditional role of established authorities while creating an environment where unverified opinions can gain widespread support.

Thus, efforts to unify the determination of religious holidays cannot rely solely on technical or methodological approaches, but must take into account the underlying dimensions of legitimacy and power relations. This study demonstrates that the issue of determining the date of religious holidays is part of a broader crisis of religious authority in contemporary Islam, a crisis that demands an interdisciplinary approach combining the sociology of religion, power studies, and Islamic studies. The main contribution of this study lies in shifting the focus from methodological debates toward a critical analysis of the legitimacy of authority, thereby opening space for a more comprehensive understanding of religious dynamics in contemporary Islam in Indonesia.

C. Conclusion

This study concludes with three interrelated main findings. First, the genealogy of authority in determining religious holidays shows that religious authority is historical-constructive in nature; it is formed, shifts, and is reproduced through changing power-knowledge relations from the era of the classical caliphate, through early modernity and the nation-state era, to the digital era. No single model of authority is final or essential. Second, the

controversy of legitimacy between the state (legal-rational) and religious scholars or organizations (traditional-epistemic as well as institutional rational-scientific) shows that no single institutional actor holds a monopoly on absolute legitimacy in determining religious holidays. Every claim to legitimacy is always confronted by a counterclaim that is equally valid from a religious perspective. The dynamics of a religious community that is becoming increasingly autonomous in choosing its authorities and is influenced by social media and religious influencers serve as the theoretical context for further research, given that the corpus of this study is limited to documents from the state and religious organizations and does not yet include data on community reception (social media, interviews, surveys, or online comments). Third, the fragmentation of authority is not an anomaly that needs to be eliminated, but rather an inherent characteristic of inter-institutional contestation in contemporary Islam that demands an approach of dialogue and mutual recognition among authorities, rather than the imposition of unification, which could exacerbate tensions. The theoretical implications of this study encourage the development of Islamic studies that are more sensitive to dimensions of power, while its practical implications call for reforms to holiday-setting mechanisms that are more inclusive and participatory.

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