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THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SACRED TIME AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY (A Socio-Legal Analysis of the Isbat Session under Ministerial Regulation (PMA) No. 1 of 2026)

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Abstract

The determination of the start of the Hijri month in Indonesia is often marked by a plurality of authorities, which has the potential to trigger social fragmentation. In response to this dynamic, the state, through the Ministry of Religion, issued Minister of Religion Regulation (PMA) No. 1 of 2026 concerning the Implementation of the Isbat Session. This study examines the sociological and juridical structure of the regulation, specifically analyzing the anomaly of the closed-door session, which has often been misinterpreted as a suppression of public transparency. Employing a socio-legal approach based on library research, this analysis integrates Pierre Bourdieu's theories of Symbolic Capital and the Field, Erving Goffman's concept of Dramaturgy, and Max Weber's framework of Rational-Legal Authority. The findings reveal that PMA No. 1/2026 successfully transforms the Isbat Session into a harmonious *juridical-religious field*. Within this arena, the Ministry of Religion operates not as a hegemon, but as a "Central Bank of Symbolic Capital" that brilliantly orchestrates the social capital of Islamic organizations and the cultural-scientific capital of astronomers into a national consensus. Furthermore, the closed-door clause (*backstage*) is shown not to be an attempt to suppress freedom of expression, but rather a sociological mitigation tool designed to protect public tranquility from the noise of high-level technical debates. Ultimately, the consensus presented to the public sphere (*frontstage*) fosters voluntary compliance through the performative power of the law. This study concludes that through precise institutional governance, the state successfully synergizes science and religion to achieve legal certainty and harmony in worship in the era of an open society.

Keywords:
Religious Authority, Isbat Session, Socio-legal Study, Social Harmony.

Abstrak

Penetapan kalender Hijriah di Indonesia sering kali melibatkan pluralitas metodologi yang berpotensi memicu fragmentasi sosial, sehingga negara melakukan institusionalisasi Sidang Isbat melalui Peraturan Menteri Agama (PMA) No. 1 Tahun 2026. Penelitian ini mengkaji dinamika prosedural penyelenggaraan sidang yang

bersifat tertutup dan implikasinya terhadap pengelolaan otoritas keagamaan serta ketertiban sosial. Menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan dengan pendekatan sosiologi hukum (*socio-legal*), teks regulasi dianalisis melalui teori Ranah (*Field*) Pierre Bourdieu. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa format sidang tertutup berfungsi sebagai panggung belakang (*backstage*) institusional yang dirancang untuk mengelola keragaman pandangan teologis dan saintifik di antara para pemangku kepentingan. Mekanisme ini memungkinkan negara mengonstruksi tampilan panggung depan (*frontstage*) yang terpadu demi menjaga harmoni sosial dan memperkuat legitimasi institusional di ranah keagamaan. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa regulasi tersebut beroperasi sebagai instrumen harmonisasi administratif, di mana negara berperan sebagai mediator utama dalam menyeimbangkan kebebasan beragama dengan kebutuhan akan kepastian hukum nasional dan kohesi sosial.

Kata Kunci:
Otoritas Keagamaan, Sidang Isbat, Sosiologi Hukum, Harmoni Sosial.

A. Introduction

In the landscape of the sociology of religion and state affairs in Indonesia, the dimension of time never operates in a vacuum or merely as a neutral indicator of astronomical chronology. Time, particularly *sacred time*, is an arena of contestation fraught with negotiations of identity, theology, and power.[1] As emphasized in classical sociological studies, the establishment of the cyclical timing of religious celebrations is a form of organizing collective memory and the rhythms of the faithful's lives, reflecting how society understands divine reality and its social structure. In Indonesia, the most tangible manifestation of this contestation over sacred time is found in the annual ritual of determining the start of the Qamariyah month—or the Hijri month—particularly during crucial periods such as Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah. Determining when millions of Muslims across the archipelago must begin fasting and when they are permitted to celebrate the day of victory is not merely a matter of mathematical calculation or optical observation, but rather a massive-scale religious-political orchestration.[2]

[1] T. Fitzgerald, *"The Ideology of Religious Studies"* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

[2] Susiknan Azhari, "The Challenges of the Global Islamic Calendar in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution," *Jurnal Fiqh* 18, no. 1 (June 24, 2021): 117–134, https://doi.org/10.22452/fiqh.vol18no1. See also M. Fauzi, *NU and the Government in Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Month* (Mojokerto: Sinau Falak Nusantara, 2024).

Historically, the discourse on determining the start of the Hijri month in Indonesia has always been characterized by sharp methodological differences among various elements of civil society, particularly Islamic mass organizations (ormas), scholars of Islamic astronomy, higher education institutions, and state officials.[3] These points of contention generally center on two main epistemological approaches: the *hisab* method and *the rukyatulhilal* method.[4] These differences in criteria and methodology often lead to the bitter reality of divergent determinations regarding the start of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha at the grassroots level.[5] From the perspective of legal and political sociology, this phenomenon of divided religious practice presents a highly problematic dual dilemma for the state. On the one hand, as a democratic state that respects diversity, the state is obligated to guarantee freedom of belief and expression for all its citizens, including protecting the freedom of Islamic organizations to adhere to the ijtihad of their respective astronomical schools without coercion.[6] On the other hand, however, a modern state inherently seeks to unify, standardize, and codify every aspect of public life to ensure administrative order, social cohesion, bureaucratic order, and the synchronization of national holidays.[7]

To address this dilemma, the government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has institutionalized a *state-sponsored* mediation mechanism known as the Isbat Session. Through this bureaucratic platform, the state seeks to

[3] B. Alwi, "The Dynamics of Determining the Start of the Hijri Month in Indonesia: Seeking Common Ground" (UIN Walisongo, 2018).

[4] Ahmad Izzuddin, *Practical Astronomy: Practical Hisab-Rukyat Methods and Solutions to Related Problems* (Pustaka Rizki Putra, 2012).

[5] Nur Faizah and Ahmad Syifaul Anam, "Scientific Analysis of Evaluating the Methodology for Confirming Hilal Observation Reports in Determining the Beginning of the Hijri Month," *Al-Afaq: Journal of Islamic Astronomy and Astronomy* 6, no. 1 (2024): 1–13.

[6] Ahmad Fadholi, "The Isbat Session: Its Urgency and Dynamics," 4, no. 2 (2019): 147–69.

[7] Suhartini, "A Sociological Analysis of Religion: The Relationship Between the State, Religious Scholars, and Society," *Journal of the Sociology of Religion*, 2021.

bridge the various spectra of astronomical thought and transform this sociological-theological fragmentation into a legally binding national consensus.[8]

A review of previous studies (*literature review*) indicates that the discourse on determining the start of the Hijri month and the dynamics of religious authority in Indonesia generally centers on two main areas of study. The first domain is astronomical-legal research that emphasizes debates over scientific criteria, such as studies on the implementation and challenges of the Neo-MABIMS criteria (a 3-degree visibility threshold for the crescent moon and a 6.4-degree elongation) in the context of regional unification of the Islamic calendar.[9] The second domain is a study of political sociology and law that highlights the power relations between the state and Islamic civil society,[10] where the institutionalization of religious authority by the ministry gives rise to ongoing negotiations between bureaucratic ulama and independent groups.[11]

Although previous literature has successfully mapped the tensions between the discourse of astronomical science, the interests of Islamic organizations, and bureaucratic hegemony, *the novelty* of this study lies in its deconstructive analysis focused on the anatomy of procedural secrecy within the latest policy instrument, namely Ministerial Regulation (PMA) No. 1 of 2026. No previous study has sociologically dissected the clause mandating closed-door

[8] Ahmad Syifaul Anam, "The Dynamics of the Isbat Session in Indonesia from 1381 AH–1441 AH / 1962 CE–2020 CE (A Study of Law, Shari'ah Politics, and History)" (UIN Walisongo Semarang, 2022).

[9] Fadholi, "The Isbat Session: Its Urgency and Dynamics." See also N. Aris, "The Role of the Crescent Visibility Theory in Decision-Making at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia's Isbat Session (Analytical Study…," *Repository.Iainkudus.Ac.Id*, n.d., http://repository.iainkudus.ac.id/10239/1/Laporan Penelitian 2013.pdf; See Also Amma Fathuurrahmaan, "Analysis of the Policy Formulation for Determining Festival Dates in the Isbat Session by the Indonesian Government," *Arus Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 6, no. 1 SE-Article (April 20, 2026): 772–7

[10] Sudarmadi Putra and M. Staines, "Dynamics of the Isbat Session and Differences in Determining the Beginning of Ramadan 1447 H in Indonesia," *ALFALAK: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* 1, no. 1 SE-Articles (n.d.): 11–24, https://juna.nusantarajournal.com/index.php/jasu/article/view/234.

[11] Siti Badriyah, "The Isbat Session and State Religious Legitimacy," *Journal of Islamic Studies and Society* 4, no. 1 (2020): 45–63.

hearings. This study offers a new perspective by not treating the secrecy of hearings as merely a standard meeting protocol, but rather by critically analyzing it as a mechanism of symbolic capital employed by the state.

The issuance of Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation (PMA) No. 1 of 2026 on the Conduct of Isbat Sessions is, in fact, intended to provide precise legal certainty by mandatorily establishing standardized criteria *for imkanurrukyat* based on the MABIMS agreement.[12] These quantitative criteria provide the Minister with a measurable tool to screen incoming reports from individuals and civil society organizations. However, behind the narrative of transparency and the integration of modern astronomy, a structural anomaly emerges in Article 6, paragraph (2), which states: "The Isbat Hearing as referred to in paragraph (1) shall be held behind closed doors."[13] This confidentiality clause presents a paradox. On the one hand, this Ministerial Regulation promotes participation by inviting the House of Representatives, the Supreme Court, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), and experts. However, the same regulation stifles public access to the space for dialectic and intellectual debate where the validation of data takes place.

The public is relegated to a passive role and is only permitted to consume the final outcome through press conferences. The frequently cited justification—that hearings must be held behind closed doors to quell debates deemed unsuitable for public consumption—only further confirms the existence of a structure of information dominance. This indicates that restricting access (*closeness*) is an architectural-sociological construct designed to control discourse and monopolize the interpretation of truth.[14]

[12] Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, "Decision of the Minister of Religious Affairs Regarding the Determination of the Start of Ramadan 1446 H," 2025.

[13] Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, "Decision of the Minister of Religious Affairs on the Determination of the Beginning of Ramadan 1446 H," 2025.

[14] A. Rasyid, "The Dynamics of Religious Authority and Power Relations: A Sociological-Legal Perspective," *Himmah: Journal of Contemporary Islamic Studies* 9, no. 2 (2020); P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

To analyze the normative legal text of PMA No. 1 of 2026, this analysis cannot rely solely on pure constitutional law. A set of multidisciplinary conceptual tools from the field of Critical Sociology is required. The primary focus of this research draws on the sociological theories of habitus and field developed by the French thinker Pierre Bourdieu. Pierre Bourdieu's thought provides a profound relational analytical framework for unraveling how power in the modern era does not merely operate through coercion or physical force by state apparatus, but mutates very subtly into forms of symbolic domination that are subtle, imperceptible, and institutionalized within the legal order.[15] The Isbat hearing is analyzed as a concrete manifestation of *the Juridical-Religious Field*[16] —an epicenter of competition where actors vie for intellectual and social capital, and ultimately, symbolic capital.[17] When the system for determining holiday dates is ratified behind closed doors and accepted by the public as an administrative norm in the name of "harmony."[18]

Theoretically, this study aims to enrich the body of knowledge in the Sociology of Islamic Law through the hybridization of Symbolic Capital theory in the analysis of statutory *law*. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to serve as material for reflection for policymakers (the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia) as well as stakeholders (*civil society*). The objective is to formulate a model for integrating public information transparency into the formulation of religious law, in order to support the efforts of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in establishing legal certainty that aligns with the principle of academic transparency in the era of an open society.

B. Methods

[15] E. B. Weininger, "Pierre Bourdieu on Social Class and Symbolic Violence," in *Approaches to Class Analysis*, ed. E. O. Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[16] Bourdieu, **Outline of a Theory of Practice**.

[17] P. Bourdieu, "The Force of Law: Toward a Sociology of the Juridical Field," **The Hastings Law Journal** 38 (1987).

[18] Weininger, "Pierre Bourdieu on Social Class and Symbolic Violence."

This qualitative study, based on *library research*, employs *a socio-legal approach* to analyze state regulations not merely as passive administrative documents, but as *"working* texts" within the arena of formulating social and religious norms. The primary data corpus is based on the authentic document, Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. 1 of 2026 concerning the Conduct of Isbat Sessions, supported by secondary data in the form of academic literature related to astronomy, the sociological dynamics of Islamic mass organizations, and state governance. Data analysis was conducted using *Critical* Discourse *Analysis* (*CDA*), operationalized through a hybrid theoretical framework: Pierre Bourdieu's theories of the Field and *Symbolic* Capital, Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical approach (*Frontstage* and *Backstage*), and Max Weber's conception of Rational--Legal Authority. Through this multidisciplinary theoretical integration, the stages of analysis systematically focused on dissecting the structure of bureaucratic language in policy provisions, mapping the functional stratification of actors' authority during court proceedings, and sociological abstraction of information management mechanisms through closed-door hearings. This series of methodological steps is comprehensively designed to reveal how the ministry as an institution elegantly and constructively orchestrates various forms of religious, social, and scientific capital within society, then converts them into a cohesive form of rational-legal authority to produce binding legal certainty, mitigate polarization, and ensure harmony in religious worship.

C. Results and Discussion

1. The Construction of *the "Field"* (Domain) of the Isbat Hearing in PMA No. 1 of 2026

To understand institutional governance and the functioning of law in society, analysis can begin by examining the space where such authority is articulated and harmonized. In Pierre Bourdieu's sociological paradigm, every structured social interaction operates within a *Field* (Ranah).[19] A field is not merely a physical space, but rather a field of objective relations between social positions that possesses its own internal logic. In this context, the *Juridical Field* is characterized by interpretive authority—that is, the legally recognized authority to interpret texts and establish norms to be followed by the broader society.[20]

The Isbat Hearing, which has now been codified and refined through Ministerial Regulation No. 1 of 2026, has been formally established as an integrative *juridical-religious field*. This session serves as a harmonious nexus between state authority (positive law), sacred authority (Islamic sharia), and epistemological authority (astronomical science). The text of the Ministerial Regulation, particularly Article 5 ([21]), serves as the structural framework that defines *the boundaries* of participation proportionally to ensure effective decision-making. Article 5 of Ministerial Regulation No. 1 of 2026 outlines the carefully designed categorization of membership in the Isbat Council by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Table 1.1 below illustrates the structure of this integration of authority along with its analysis from the perspective of Bourdieu's concept of *capital*.

Table 1.1 Functional Stratification in *the* Isbat Hearing *Process* Based on Article 5 of PMA No. 1/2026

[19] P. Bourdieu, "Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field," *Comparative Social Research* 13 (1991).

[20] Bourdieu, "The Force of Law: Toward a Sociology of the Juridical Field."

[21] Ministry of Religious Affairs RI, "Decision of the Minister of Religious Affairs Regarding the Determination of the Start of Ramadan 1446 H."

Classification	Legal Basis	Bourdieu's Perspective	Structural Implications
- Determining Group	Article 5, paragraph (2): "...The Minister shall include representatives from..." *(Nature: Imperative/Mandatory)*	● Bureaucratic & Political Capital: (House of Representatives, Minister) ● Judicial Capital: (Supreme Court) ● Religious & Mass Capital: (MUI, Islamic Mass Organizations) ● Cultural/Scientific Capital: (Institutional experts).	These groups serve as catalysts for national consensus. Their presence is a pillar supporting rational, legal, and social legitimacy. Through these groups, the state orchestrates a consensus between religion and science before enacting public laws.
Complementary Groups	Article 5, paragraph (3): "...The Minister may include representatives from..." *(Nature: Optional/Discretionary)*	● External Symbolic Capital: (Embassy) ● Academic Cultural Capital: (Higher Education Institutions) ● Traditional Capital: (Islamic boarding schools).	These groups are dynamic supporting actors. Their involvement is facilitated through the Minister's administrative flexibility; they serve to enrich cultural and academic perspectives, broadening the scope of deliberations without slowing down the core decision-making process.

The table above confirms the sociological postulate that the law constantly engages in functional stratification to achieve order. In Group I ( ), there is evidence of a very careful effort at assimilation between state apparatus and the pillars of civil society. The inclusion of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and Islamic mass organizations as mandatory components is a brilliant managerial move by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Indonesia's sociological history shows that mass organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Persis possess immense and deeply rooted "social capital" (the trust of the faithful). The state—which, in a Weberian approach, represents rational-legal authority—recognizes that the effectiveness of the Hijri calendar policy will be maximized if it is synergized with the ulama of these organizations, who represent traditional and charismatic authority.

If the determination of religious holidays is carried out without the active involvement of mass organizations in Group I, the state risks facing social fragmentation, in which grassroots communities may experience confusion regarding which authority to follow. Therefore, the mandatory involvement of civil society organizations is a form of institutional symbiosis; the Ministry of Religious Affairs provides a space for respect and participation at the center of policymaking, and as a result, these organizations contribute their social capital to strengthen the foundation of legal certainty issued by the state for the benefit of the people.

The most intriguing dynamic in the construction of this *field* lies in the positioning of experts or specialists in relation to higher education institutions and Islamic boarding schools. Article 5, paragraph (2), places experts/specialists in the mandatory category, while Article 5, paragraph (3), places higher education institutions and Islamic boarding schools in the optional category (to be adjusted according to need). From the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, this reveals a strategic move by the Ministry of Religious Affairs to align scientific discourse with the need for pragmatic legal certainty. The term “experts” involved in Ring 1 refers to scientists and astronomers from government agencies, university lecturers, or experts in Islamic astronomy from civil society organizations whose scientific expertise has been aligned with national public policy parameters—such as the MABIMS criteria (3° geocentric and 6.4° elongation) mandated by Article 4. These experts are present to operationalize science into *applied knowledge* that technically supports legal provisions, ensuring that the nation’s laws have a valid basis in scientific rationality (*Cultural Capital*).

Conversely, universities and Islamic boarding schools are bastions of academic freedom and intellectual autonomy. On college campuses or in Salafi boarding schools, the discourse that develops is purely exploratory in nature, where studies ranging from the limitations of optical instruments to differences in scholarly chains of transmission are highly valued as part of academic richness. By

placing these purely academic institutions in the optional cluster, the Minister of Religious Affairs secures a space *for managerial discretion*. This is done to ensure that academic freedom of debate (*academic discourse*) does not overlap with the urgency of *legal decision-making* in courtrooms. Through this instrument, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has successfully distinguished between science oriented toward administrative certainty and science oriented toward scholarly dialectics, thereby ensuring that the authority of the Isbat Session—as a forum for legal determination—remains effective and respected.

2. Closed-Door Sessions as a Forum for Negotiation and Consolidation of Authority

While Article 5 governs who is invited to participate in policy formulation, Article 6(2) establishes the format of the meetings. The provision stating, "The Isbat session referred to in paragraph (1) shall be held in closed session," is one of the most strategic managerial instruments in PMA No. 1 of 2026. Regulations concerning the public sphere, managed through this closed-door hearing mechanism, often spark discourse on the relationship between information transparency, religious authority, and the mitigation of public confusion.

The nature of these closed-door proceedings cannot be explained solely by administrative procedures; rather, it requires a theoretical framework drawn from Erving Goffman's concept of the dramaturgy of interaction.[22] Goffman posits that the cohesion of complex social life is maintained through the division of space into *Frontstage* and *Backstage*. *The Frontstage* is the showcase where an institution presents its public persona in accordance with audience expectations; here, everything appears orderly, harmonious, and convincing. However, this ideal performance on the Frontstage would not be possible without *the* Backstage—an exclusive zone behind the curtain, shielded from the hustle and bustle of the audience, where the actors prepare the script, reconcile technical differences, engage in in-depth discourse, and formulate a solid common ground.

[22] E. Goffman, **The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life** (New York: Anchor Books, 1959).

In the context of this PMA, the Isbat Session as a whole is designed as an institutional *"backstage"* process in which the Ministry of Religious Affairs acts as the primary facilitator. Its systematic flow is clearly outlined in the session procedures under Article 6, paragraph (3):

a. Single Exposition (*The Input*): The Director General presents a comprehensive report from within the government regarding computational data and a compilation of *new moon sighting* reports from state observation posts.
b. Dialectical Filtering (*The Filter*): The report is then reviewed and responded to exclusively by hearing participants representing various scientific and religious authorities.

It is this stage of testing and response that constitutes the most crucial phase. The history of the dynamics of astronomical authority in Indonesia provides empirical evidence that debates among astronomers, Islamic jurists, and government officials regarding the validity of a method or testimony often involve highly complex and sharp technical arguments. Recognizing that this high-level scientific discourse can trigger confusion (*noise*) or even polarization among groups if consumed by the general public without a complete context, the state has established a mechanism for closed-door proceedings. Here, the state assumes a protective role; it safeguards the public's peace of mind from the complexities of methodological debates, ensuring that the public receives only final results that are well-considered, validated, and ready to be followed.

After intensive deliberations, scholarly debate, and the successful harmonization of viewpoints behind *the scenes* (in a closed-door meeting), the show moved to *the front stage*. The Minister of Religious Affairs stepped into the press conference room, where he was in the spotlight of the national media.[23] It is on this front stage that the state presents a united front of the faithful (positive

[23] Indonesian Ulema Council, "Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) No. 2 of 2004 on the Determination of the Start of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah" (2004).

impression management). The public is not shown the process of scholarly friction; what they witness is a consensus (unanimous decision) from all *those in authority*. The success of this institutional dramaturgy is underpinned by what Bourdieu's sociology refers to as the operation of *Symbolic* Violence, which culminates in the internalization of authority or Miscognition.[24] The closed-door session at is, in essence, an instrument for formulating collective truth. By limiting direct access to raw academic discourse, the state mitigates the potential for mass confusion. This authoritative leadership is accepted by society not as a restriction of rights, but as a manifestation of legal certainty. Why is this the case? Because such compliance is shaped through *Symbolic Violence* in its constructive sociological sense.

Bourdieu explains that symbolic power does not operate through physical coercion, but rather through the creation of *common sense*—a framework in which the guidelines set by those in authority are voluntarily accepted and respected by society. The public feels that the governance of the Isbat Session is reasonable, reassuring, and even something to be grateful for, because the discourse deeply ingrained in society is that it is carried out to preserve the unity of the Muslim community. *Miscognition* (in the sociological sense of unawareness of the existence of structural engineering) is elegantly achieved: the Ministry of Religious Affairs' managerial steps to implement MABIMS criteria for the standardization of the state bureaucratic calendar are fully perceived by the public as authoritative guidelines that bring public benefit and safeguard their religious practices. Through a deliberation process conducted behind closed doors but announced publicly, the state has succeeded in fostering voluntary compliance—which is essential for religious harmony in Indonesia.

3. The State's Management of Symbolic Capital as an Expression of Rational Authority

[24] Weininger, "Pierre Bourdieu on Social Class and Symbolic Violence."

The culmination of all structural and functional analyses of PMA No. 1 of 2026 centers on affirming the state's position as the rational-legal central authority in the religious-public sphere. Bourdieu's thought offers a highly precise sociological metaphor for interpreting this phenomenon, in which the state operates as *the Central Bank of Symbolic Capital*.[25] Historically and sociologically, religious authority in Indonesia—particularly within the field of falak—was initially highly dispersed and fragmented. There were charismatic ulama who led Islamic boarding schools and inherited classical *astronomical* texts from earlier scholars; there were leaders of mass organizations who held patronage capital over tens of millions of followers; and there were observatory scientists who possessed cultural capital in the form of cutting-edge technology. If left to operate independently without a coordinator, this accumulation of diverse resources has the potential to clash and result in overlapping Hijri calendars. This is where the state's intervention through PMA No. 1/2026 becomes essential—namely, to bridge this autonomy into a unified consensus.

This integrated framework is very clearly codified in Article 6, paragraph (1): "The Minister presides over the Isbat Session" and is concluded with a stipulatory clause in paragraph (4): "The Minister determines the beginning of the months of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dhu al-Hijjah after considering the report of the Director General and the responses of the participants in the Isbat Session...". The Minister referred to in this article is not merely a technical official, but rather the embodiment of state sovereignty (*The State*) that holds administrative authority. Although the Isbat session is attended by prominent religious scholars Supreme Court justices, and professors of astronomy, ultimately, within the *Juridical Field* of Isbat, it is *the* state's *juridical capital* that serves as the unifying force. The presence of representatives from civil society organizations and experts essentially constitutes a process of *depositing* their cultural, religious, and social

[25] E. S. Gultom, "The Symbolic Capital of Ulos Among Christians," *Elite Journal* 10, no. 1 (2025).

capital into the lap of state institutions. The Minister then assimilates all these perspectives, harmonizes them under the umbrella of the rational criteria of MABIMS, and formulates them into a national decree. The Minister of Religion's decision carries extraordinary authority precisely because it incorporates the communal consent of religious and scientific elites.

This legitimizing support is further solidified through the presence of a theological instrument, namely Fatwa No. 2 of 2004 issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), which adopts the principle of *political* jurisprudence (fiqh *siyāsah*): *"hukmul hakim ilzamun wa yarfa'ul khilaf"* (the government's decision is binding and resolves differences of opinion). This harmonious synergy between the legality of the Ministerial Regulation (rational-legal authority) and the legitimacy of the MUI Fatwa (religious authority) makes the Minister's decree a very solid guide for the faithful.

The most empirical evidence of the effectiveness of this management of symbolic capital is how the law articulated by the Minister possesses the power to confer certainty upon reality—a sociological phenomenon that Bourdieu termed *"The Performative Magic of Law"* (the performative magic of law). In the legal realm, texts or utterances possess an *illocutionary* dimension; legal language does not merely describe the world but performs actions that have tangible consequences in shaping the social order. This performative power finds its ideal form in the provision of Article 4, paragraph (5) of PMA No. 1/2026: "In the event that the criteria for imkanurrukyat as referred to in paragraph (1) are not met, the current month shall be rounded up to 30 (thirty) days."

The sociological and legal implications of this provision can be observed in the resolution of empirical dynamics on the ground. For example, when a group of people swears they have seen the crescent moon on the western horizon, but based on measurements from the state's optical instruments (*mechanical/scientific validity*), the moon's elevation is only at 2 degrees—below the MABIMS minimum criterion of 3 degrees. Through the precise language of the

law, such naked-eye testimony must be invalidated to maintain the standardization of criteria.

Through the Minister of Religious Affairs, the state announces that the lunar month has not yet changed. Here, casuistic reality (individual observation) is aligned with rational-legal reality (scientific bureaucratic criteria). This transformation of legal certainty can only be peacefully accepted by the general public if the Ministry of Religious Affairs has successfully maintained its symbolic capital—namely, the high level of public trust in the state's authority, scientific capabilities, and good intentions.

Ultimately, sacred religious time no longer operates as a wild and uncharted entity, but has been managed, organized, and formalized by bureaucratic authorities for the public good. Through this Ministerial Regulation, the instruments *of governmentality* operate elegantly. Religious authorities in society are not suppressed but rather embraced, facilitated, and integrated to strengthen the modern state order, which ensures certainty and order in the religious practices of Muslims in Indonesia.

D. Conclusion

This *study* concludes that PMA No. 1 of 2026 constructs the Isbat Session as a measurable Juridical-Religious *Field*, within which the Ministry of Religious Affairs operates as *the* "*Central* Bank *of* Symbolic *Capital*." Through the stratification of membership in Article 5, the state cleverly orchestrates and harmonizes the social capital of Islamic mass organizations and the cultural-scientific capital of experts into the mandatory decision-making group, while providing space for pure academic discourse within the optional cluster. The conversion of all this capital culminates in *the* rational-legal authority of the Minister of Religious Affairs, who employs *the performative magic of law* to translate scientific parameters (MABIMS criteria) and fatwas issued by religious scholars into a solid and binding national legal certainty.

Furthermore, the closed-door proceedings mandated in Article 6, paragraph (2), have proven to function as a crucial sociological mitigation instrument through an institutional dramaturgy approach. The closed hearing room (*Backstage*) is utilized by the state to manage and finalize the complexities of high-level scientific dialectics so as not to cause mass confusion (*noise*), before the consensus is ultimately presented harmoniously to the public (*Frontstage*). Through the implementation of constructive *symbolic power* and precise governmentality, the state acts not to dominate, but to embrace and synergize all religious authorities in order to foster voluntary compliance and harmony in the worship practices of Muslims in Indonesia.

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