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URGENCY OF UNIFYING THE ISLAMIC CALENDER (Reading the Epistemology of Shafi'I Jurisprudence Amidst the Tide of Lunar Globalization)

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze Imam al-Shafi'i's perspective on the determination of the beginning of the lunar month (*qamariyah*) and its relevance to the concept of a Global Hijri Calendar, which is rooted in the differences between the *rukyat* method based on crescent moon observation and the astronomical *hisab* approach that promotes the concept of unified *matla'*. The research questions are: (1) how is the conceptualization of determining the beginning of the lunar month according to Imam al-Shafi'i in *al-Umm*; and (2) how relevant is this perspective to the development of a unified Global Hijri Calendar. This study employs a qualitative approach through library research by analyzing *al-Umm* as the primary source, supported by classical fiqh literature and contemporary astronomical studies, using Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement theory to understand both the historical context and contemporary relevance. The findings indicate that: (1) Imam al-Shafi'i places *rukyat* as the primary method with the principle of *ikhtilaf al-mathali'* (local lunar horizon differences); and (2) the Global Hijri Calendar can be accommodated within the Shafi'i framework through a contextual reinterpretation of legal principles by positioning *hisab* as a supporting instrument and *rukyat* as the basis for validation. The study concludes that integrating classical and contemporary approaches requires a contextual framework that accommodates developments in astronomical science to address the needs of modern Muslims without neglecting fundamental Sharia principles.

Keywords:
Global Hijri Calendar, Shafi'i School of Law, Determination of Lunar Months, Crescent Observation, Astronomical Calculation

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pandangan Imam al-Syafi'i dalam penentuan awal bulan qamariyah serta relevansinya terhadap gagasan Kalender Hijriah global, yang dilatarbelakangi oleh perbedaan antara metode rukyat berbasis observasi hilal dan pendekatan hisab astronomi yang mengusung konsep kesatuan *matla'*. Pertanyaan penelitian ini meliputi: (1) bagaimana konseptualisasi penentuan

awal bulan qamariyah menurut Imam al-Syafi'i dalam kitab *al-Umm*; dan (2) bagaimana relevansinya terhadap pengembangan Kalender Hijriah global Tunggal.. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif melalui studi pustaka (*library research)* dengan menganalisis kitab *al-Umm* sebagai sumber utama serta literatur fikih dan astronomi kontemporer, menggunakan kerangka analisis teori Double Movement Fazlur Rahman untuk memahami konteks historis dan relevansi kontemporer. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: (1) Imam al-Syafi'i menempatkan rukyat sebagai metode utama dengan prinsip *ikhtilaf al-mathali'* yang bersifat lokal; dan (2) Kalender Hijriah global dapat diakomodasi dalam kerangka mazhab Syafi'i melalui reinterpretasi prinsip fikih dengan menempatkan hisab sebagai instrumen pendukung dan rukyat sebagai dasar validasi. Kesimpulan penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa integrasi pendekatan klasik dan kontemporer memerlukan pendekatan kontekstual yang mengakomodasi perkembangan ilmu falak guna menjawab kebutuhan umat Islam modern tanpa mengabaikan prinsip dasar syariat.

Kata kunci:
Kalender Hijriah Global, Fikih Mazhab Syafi'i, Penentuan Awal Bulan Qamariyah, Rukyat Hilal, Hisab

A. Introduction

The determination of the beginning of the lunar month is a central issue in the religious practices of Muslims, as it is directly related to the performance of certain acts of worship. Nevertheless, the determination of the beginning of the month often causes polemics among the community. [1] This debate frequently occurs at local, national, and even international levels, leading to confusion and disputes among Muslims.[2] The determination of the beginning of the Islamic month, commonly referred to as the lunar month, is an important matter for Muslims, as it is not only used to determine Islamic holidays but also to establish the beginning and end of the month of Ramadan and the month of Dhu al-Hijjah, because this issue pertains to obligatory acts of worship. [3]

Context of globalization and the development of information technology has given rise to the idea of unifying the Hijri calendar globally as an effort to address the differences in the determination of the beginning of the lunar month. However, this idea has also sparked new debates, particularly regarding the

[1] Ahmad Izzuddin, *Fiqih Hisab Rukyah* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2007): 2-3.

[2] Nurul Badriyah dan Faisal, "Penetapan Awal Bulan Dengan Metode Ittihadul Matla' Di Indonesia" 5, no. 2 (2018): 91–102.

[3] Akh. Mukarram, *Ilmu Falak Dasar-Dasar Hisab Praktis* (Sidoarjo: Grafika Media, 2015).

alignment between classical fiqh approaches and the developments in modern astronomy. Methodologically, the determination of the beginning of the lunar month relies on two main approaches, namely rukyat (direct observation of the crescent moon) and hisab (astronomical calculation). [4] Various previous studies have examined the debate between these two methods and their implications for the determination of the Islamic calendar, while hisab offers accuracy based on modern science. [5] In addition, several studies have also raised the concept of a Global Hijri Calendar with the approach of the unity of the horizon (*ittihad al-matla'*) as an effort to unify the prayer times of Muslims. [6] However, studies that specifically link the views of the Shafi'i school, particularly the thoughts of Imam al-Shafi'i in the book al-Umm, with the discourse on the global Hijri calendar are still relatively limited.

The Shafi'i school, as one of the majority fiqh schools in the Islamic world, including Indonesia, has its own approach in addressing this issue. Imam al-Syafi'i placed rukyat as the main basis for determining the beginning of the month and recognized the principle of ikhtilāf al-maṭāliʿ as a legitimacy for differences in determination across various regions. This approach reflects a local orientation in determining the timing of worship. [7] On the other hand, the development of modern observation technology allows the visibility of the crescent moon to be monitored more widely and simultaneously, raising questions about the relevance of this principle in a global context.

Starting from that condition, this research focuses on two aspects: (1) how the conceptualization of the determination of the beginning of the lunar month according to Imam al-Shafi'i in the book *al-Umm*; and (2) its relevance to the

[4] Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i, "*Al-Umm*",*Vol. 1* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 2001).

[5] Asriani Bahar, "Studi Komparati Hisab Kontemporer Ephemeris Dan Algoritma," *HISABUNA: Jurnal Ilmu Falak* 2, no. 2 (2021): 48–72, https://doi.org/10.24252/hisabuna.v2i2.18650.

[6] Susiknan Azhari, "Mohammad Ilyas Dan Gagasannya Tentang Kalender Islam Internasional," *Al-Jami'ah* 39, no. 1 (2001): 414–35.

[7] Bustanul Iman RN, "Penetapan Awal Bulan Qamariyah Perspektif Fiqh," *Jurnal Hukum Diktum* Vol.14, no. 1 (2016): 1–28.

development of the global Hijri calendar. This research is based on the hypothesis that the principles of jurisprudence of Imam al-Shafi'i can be contextually reinterpreted to accommodate the integration of rukyat and hisab in the global calendar system. Thus, this study aims to analyze Imam al-Shafi'i's thoughts on the determination of the beginning of the lunar month and examine its relevance in the development of a more integrated and contextual global Hijri calendar that meets the needs of contemporary Muslims.

B. Methods

This research is a library resesarch[8] of a qualitative-analytical nature to examine the thoughts of Imam al-Shafi'i in the Book of al-Umm regarding the determination of the beginning of the lunar month and its relevance to the global Hijri Calendar. The data sources include primary data in the form of the Book of al-Umm and secondary data from Shafi'i school of thot literature, astronomy, and contemporary studies on rukyat and hisab. Data were collected thru documentation techniques and analyzed using content analysis with a normative-historical approach based on Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement framework, which involves tracing the historical context to find normative principles (present to past) and contextualizing them in modern reality (past to present). Thru this method, the research aims to formulate a conceptual synthesis between rukyat and hisab within the framework of the global Hijri Calendar.

C. Results And Discussions

1. Determination of the Beginning Qamariyah Month from the Perspective of Imam Shafi'i

Based on the birth date of Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Idris asy-Syafi'i, also known as Imam Syafi'i, who is the founder of the Shafi'i school of thought, he was born in Gaza (Palestine) in the year 150 H or 767 AD. [9] His father's name was

[8] Harahap and Nursapia, "Penelitian Kepustakaan," *Iqra* 8, no. 1 (2014): 68–73. https://jurnal.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/iqra/article/view/65.

[9] Muhammad Abu Zahrah, *Ushul Al-Fiqh* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 1958): 15-16.

Muhammad bin Idris bin Abbas bin Utsman bin Syafi'i bin Sa'ib bin Abdu Yazid bin Hasyim bin Abdul Muthalib bin Abdul Manaf. As for his maternal lineage, it is Muhammad binti Fatimah bin Abdullah bin Al-Hasan bin Husain bin Ali bin Abi Talib.

Imam as-Syafi'i is known as a great scholar who, from a young age, demonstrated his intelligence, including memorizing the Qur'an at around nine years old. He also delved into various Islamic sciences, including hadith with Imam Sufyan bin 'Uyainah and Qur'anic sciences with Imam Ismail bin Qastan. His contributions were very significant in the fields of fiqh and ushul al-fiqh, especially thru his ability to integrate the approaches of Ahlul Hadis and Ahlul Ra'yi, which then gave rise to the Shafi'i school of thought. He was born in the same year as the death of Imam Abu Hanifah, the founder of the Hanafi school, one of the major schools in Islam alongside Maliki, Hanbali, and Ja'fari. [10]

Although known as a great imam, Imam Syafi'i was very open to differing opinions. Imam Syafi'i said about his school of thought, *"If a Sahih hadith contradicts my words, then throw my words behind the wall."* Imam Syafi'i also said, *"Follow the scholars of hadith, for they are the most truthful." Furthermore, it was stated, "All my words that contradict a Sahih hadith, then take the Sahih hadith and do not follow me blindly."* Additionally, Imam Syafi'i emphasized, *"If you find in my book something that contradicts the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (SAW), then follow the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah and leave my words."*

Imam Shafi'i's reluctance to use hisab as a method for determining the beginning of the lunar month is because Imam Shafi'i tended to lean more toward hadith, as during that time Imam Shafi'i maintained the position of hadith as one of the primary sources of Islamic law. [11] One of Imam Shafi'i's works is the book al-

[10] Muhammad Jawad Mughniyah, *Fiqh Ja'fari Diterjemahkan Oleh Abu Zainab, Dari Fikih Al-Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq: 'Ard Wa Istidlal* (Jakarta: Lentera, 1996).

[11] Kusdiyana, "Penentuan Awal Bulan Hijriah Menurut Mazhab Syafii," *Mahkamah : Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 5, no. 2 (2020): 231, https://doi.org/10.24235/mahkamah.v5i2.7137.

Umm, which is a foundational discussion on ushul, with some parts discussing furu' (branches). In the book al-Umm, Imam Shafi'i uses the hadiths of the Prophet as the basis for deriving legal rulings, as the Prophet Muhammad SAW said that the beginning and end of fasting should be based on the sighting of the crescent moon or the completion of thirty days, as narrated by Imam al-Bukhari and Muslim:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمَا، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللهِ ﷺ ذَكَرَ رَمَضَانَ فَقَالَ: «لَا تَصُومُوا حَتَّى تَرَوُا الْهِلَالَ، وَلَا تُفْطِرُوا حَتَّى تَرَوْهُ، فَإِنْ غُمَّ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاقْدُرُوا لَهُ» (رواه البخاري)

Translation:

> "From Abdullah bin Umar radiallahuanhuma, that indeed the Messenger of Allah saw mentioned the month of Ramadan, the Prophet said do not fast until you see the crescent and do not break your fast until you see it, then if the weather is cloudy or overcast, then estimate it," (H.R Bukhari).

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بِشْرٍ الْعَبْدِيُّ حَدَّثَنَا عُبَيْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عُمَرَ عَنْ أَبِي الزِّنَادِ عَنْ الْأَعْرَجِ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ ذَكَرَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الْهِلَالَ فَقَالَ إِذَا رَأَيْتُمُوهُ فَصُومُوا وَإِذَا رَأَيْتُمُوهُ فَأَفْطِرُوا فَإِنْ أُغْمِيَ عَلَيْكُمْ فَعُدُّوا ثَلَاثِينَ

Translation:

> "Abu Bakar bin Abu Syaibah narrated to us, Muhammad bin Bisyr Al-Abdi narrated to us, Ubaidullah bin Umar narrated from Abu Zinad from Al A'raj from Abu Hurairah radliallahu 'anhu, he said; The Messenger of Allah shallallahu 'alaihi wasallam mentioned the crescent moon, then he said: 'If you see it, then fast, and if you see it (again), then break your fast. And if the moon is obscured from your sight, then count it as thirty days.'" (H.R. Muslim). [12]

Rooted in that hadith, Imam Shafi'i in the book al-Umm emphasizes the importance of rukyatul hilal and istikmal in determining the beginning of the lunar month. [13]

[12] Imam abi al-Husain Muslim bin al-Hajjaj al-Qusyairi al- Naisaburi, *Sahih Muslim*, Jil. 1 (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr, 1983).

[13] As-Syafi'I abu Abdillah Muhammad bin Idris bin Abbas, *Al-Umm*, ed. Jil. 3 (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1990).

أخبرنا الربيع قال : أخبرنا الشافعي قال : أخبرنا مالك ، عن عبد الله بن دينار ، عن ابن عمر: أن رسول الله ﷺ قال : الشهر تسع وعشرون ، لا تصوموا حتى تروا الهلال ، ولا تفطروا حتى تروه ، فإن غم عليكم فأكملو العدة ثلاثين

Translation:

> Ar-Rabi' informed us, he said: Ash-Shafi'i informed us, he said: Malik informed us from Abdullah bin Dinar, from Ibn Umar, that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: "A month is twenty-nine days. Do not fast until you see the crescent, and do not break your fast until you see it. If it is overcast, then complete the count to thirty days."

Based on that hadith, Imam Shafi'i determines the beginning of the lunar month by using rukyatul hilal on the 29th. When the crescent moon cannot be observed due to unfavorable weather conditions or the absence of witnesses who have seen the crescent moon, according to Imam Syafi'i, one must perform istikmal (completing the month to 30 days) in that month, which means completing the month to thirty days. [14] Thus, these two methods (ru'yat and istikmal) are what Imam Syafi'i used in determining the beginning of the lunar month. If viewed textually, there is not a single word or action of the Prophet that reflects the command of hisab (calculation); all of them reflect the practice of ru'yah al-hilal. Such is the depiction of Imam Syafi'i's argument.

Among the Syafi'i scholars, there are also differing opinions regarding the determination of the beginning of the lunar month. The first opinion is to perform ru'yah al-hilal and complete the month to 30 days in case of overcast weather. The difference with the majority of scholars (Hanafi, Maliki, and Hanbali) is that according to this group, if there is a sighting in one region, the sighting only applies to the nearby areas. *Matla'* linguistically comes from the word ta-la-'a which means to rise, appear, or emerge. This word can then be formed into *mathli'* and *matla'*, the first derivative (*mathli'*), meaning the place where the moon, star, or sun appears, which means that *matla'* (the place where the moon rises) is a unity

[14]Ahmad Izuddin, *Ilmu Falak Praktis Metode Hisab-Rukyat Praktis Dan Solusi Permasalahannya* (Semarang: Pustaka Rizki Putra dan Pustaka Hilal, 2012): 100-104.

throughout the world. So, if there is one place that sees the moon, then the entire world is obliged to follow it.[15]

Matla' according to the Shafi'i school, Abdurrahman al-Jaziri in his book *al-fiqhu 'ala mazhabil arba'ah* explains that if the sighting of the moon has been established in a certain region, then that region and the nearby regions are required to fast based on the moon sighting in the region where the moon was sighted, while distant regions are not required to fast due to the difference in *matla'*. The nearby regions have the same matla' as the region where the hilal was sighted, with a distance limit of approximately 24 *farsakh.*[16] The measurement of one farsakh is about 5544 m, so one matla' distance is equal to 133.56 km.

The condition for determining the beginning of the lunar month is based on the community's practice of relying on the sighting of a just person, even if their identity is unclear, whether the sighting is done in clear weather or not, provided that the observer is just, Muslim, of age, sane, free, and male. As stated in the book Minhaj al-Talibin wa 'Umdah al-Muftin by Imam an-Nawawi: [17]

يَجِبُ صوم رمضان بإكمال شعبان ثلاثين أورؤية الهلال وثبوت رؤيته بعدل وفي قول عدلان وشرط الواحد صفة العدول في الأصح لا عبد وامرأة وإذا صمنا بعدل ولم نر الهلال بعد ثلاثين أفطرنا

Translation:

> "It is obligatory to fast Ramadan with the completion of the month of Sha'ban for 30 days or by sighting the moon, with the stipulation of witnessing by one or two just individuals. According to the superior opinion, the only requirement is the attribute of justice, not the status of being a slave or a woman. And if we fast based on the testimony of a just person and it is not sighted after the 30th day, then we break the fast."

[15] Wahbah az-Zuhaili, *Al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa Adillatuhu*, (Damaskus: Dār al-Fikr, 2011): 1655–1658.

[16] Abdurrahman Al-Jaziri, *Al-Fiqhu Ala Madzhab Al-Arba'ah*, Juz I (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Fikr, 1990).

[17] Abu Zakariya Muhyiddin bin Syaraf an-nawawi, *Minhaj Al-Talibin Wa 'Umdah Al-Muftin, Juz I, (Beirut : Dar Al-Ma'Rifah),h. 34*, Juz I (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Maktab al-Islami, 1991).

The conditions set are not too strict, just like the Hanafiyah scholars. It does not have to be two just and free men; this explanation is also found in the commentary of the book Raudh al-Thalibin: [18]

وَلَو أَخبِرَهُ بِهِ صَبِيٌّ أو عبد أو امرأةً أَو فَاسِقٌ فَصَدَّقَهُ

Translation:

> "Even if the news is brought by children, servants, women, or sinners, it is still accepted."

2. The Concept of the Global Hijri Calender in the Contemporary Era

In the early days of the spread of Islam, the followers of the Prophet Muhammad SAW were known as an ummi community, meaning they were not accustomed to writing or performing detailed mathematical calculations. The determination of months in the Hijri calendar was done simply, with one month consisting of 29 days and the next month 30 days alternately. This method relies on direct observation and follows a natural pattern, as the Prophet said, narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in the book Ṣaḥih al-Bukhari: [19]

حَدَّثَنَا آدَمُ حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ حَدَّثَنَا الْأَسْوَدُ بْنُ قَيْسٍ حَدَّثَنَا سَعِيدُ بْنُ عَمْرٍو أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ ابْنَ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ إِنَّا أُمَّةٌ أُمِّيَّةٌ لَا نَكْتُبُ وَلَا نَحْسُبُ الشَّهْرُ هَكَذَا وَهَكَذَا يَعْنِي مَرَّةً تِسْعَةً وَعِشْرِينَ وَمَرَّةً ثَلَاثِينَ

Translation:

> "Adam has narrated to us, [Syu'bah] has narrated to us, Al Aswad bin Qais has narrated to us, Sa'id bin 'Amru has narrated to us that he heard Ibn 'Umar radliyallahu 'anhuma from the Prophet shallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam who said: 'We are an unlettered nation, we do not write and we do not calculate, a month is this and that, sometimes it is twenty-nine days and sometimes it is thirty days.'" (HR. Bukhari)

The scholars of the hisab school use this hadith as a reference in the legal basis for the use of the hisab method. The hisab school employs a broader logic of mafhum al-mukhalafah by considering the context of the hadith because, during

[18] Zakariya bin Muhammad bin Ahmad Anshari, *Asni Al-Mutalib Sharh Raudu Al-Thalib* (Kairo, Mesir: Daar al-Kitab al-Islamiy, 1520).

[19] Al-Ja'fiy, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*.

the time of the Prophet, there was no hisab, so it was natural not to use hisab and to prefer rukyat. However, in the present time, technology has become increasingly advanced, making the use of the hisab method very accurate, so the command for rukyat has shifted to the command for hisab. [20]

Contemporary era, marked by advancements in information technology and globalization, demands uniformity in various aspects of life, including the Hijri calendar, which has often experienced differences in the determination of the new month in various countries and Muslim communities. This has led to significant discrepancies in the observance of religious practices such as Ramadan fasting, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha. These differences not only affect religious rituals but also create complex social and administrative impacts. Various ideas and initiatives have emerged to develop the concept of a global Hijri calendar that unifies the criteria and methods for determining the beginning of the month internationally. The concept aims to create uniformity in worship while integrating astronomy, modern technology, and socio-political dynamics so that it can be accepted by Muslims worldwide.

The global Hijri calendar, commonly known as the Global Islamic Calendar, is an Islamic calendar that spans across regions and is applicable worldwide without exception. [21] The Global Hijri Calendar is an Islamic calendar system based on the Hijri calendar that aims to unify the start of the lunar month uniformly across the world, without relying on differences in *matla'* (the location of the crescent moon's sighting) in each region. This calendar was developed to address the differences in the determination of the beginning of the Hijri month in various countries, which often lead to discrepancies in Islamic worship dates such as Ramadan fasting, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and Hajj.

[20] Muhammad Faishol Amin, "Metode Penentuan Awal Bulan Kamariah Perspektif Empat Mazhab," *HAYULA: Indonesian Journal of Multidiscrplinary Islamic Studiest* 2, no. 1 (2018): 17–32.

[21] Arwin Juli Rakhmadi Butar-Butar, *Esai-Esai Kalender Islam Global* (Medan: Al-Azhar Centre, 2021).

Although the Global Hijri Calendar sets clear criteria for determining the beginning of a new month, many still strongly adhere to the tradition of physical rukyat. This becomes an obstacle because the Global Hijri Calendar, like the Islamic calendar in general, requires the use of calculations (hisab) and does not rely on the rukyat method for determining the beginning of a new month. [22] In the Unified Global Hijri Calendar (UGHC), there are what are called Principles, Conditions, and Parameters (PCP), three elements that are inherent and simultaneously become the characteristics and forms within the UGHC. Regarding the principles, there are at least five principles in the UGHC, where each principle is interconnected and complements the others.[23]

The outcome of the International Congress on the Unification of the Hijri Calendar (Global Islamic Calendar Congress) held in Istanbul, Turkey from May 28-30, 2016, resulted in an agreement on the Global Unified Hijri Calendar (GUHC). This congress was attended by around 200 participants from 50 countries, including scholars, sharia experts, and astronomy specialists. The agreement includes basic principles such as the acceptance of imkan rukyat, the unity of the horizon (ittihad al-mathali), and the implementation of a one-day-one-date system worldwide. The agreed technical criteria include a minimum crescent height of 5°, a minimum elongation of 8°, and conjunction (ijtimak) occurring before 00:00 UTC. If the possibility of sighting occurs after 00:00 UTC, the new month still begins on that day under certain conditions, such as conjunction in the eastern time zone of the Earth occurring before dawn and the possibility of sighting reaching the American continent.

The implementation of the Integrated Global Hijri Calendar (IGHC) in Indonesia has sparked various responses, one of which comes from the Nahdlatul Ulama Astronomy Institute (LFNU), which has provided 33 critical notes on the

[22] Zahid Mubarok, "Perlukah Mewujudkan Kalender Islam Global?, "2024, https://pwmu.co/364870/07/11/perlukah-mewujudkan-kalender-islam-global/.
[23] Arwin Juli Rakhmadi Butar-Butar, "Prinsip-Prinsip Kalender Hijriah Global Tunggal," 2024, https://oif.umsu.ac.id/2024/03/prinsip-prinsip-kalender-hijriah-global-tunggal/.

concept. These notes include scientific considerations based on empirical data as well as normative studies referring to the Prophet's hadiths and the fatwas of classical fiqh scholars. [24] LF PBNU member, Khafid, explained that the Unified Global Hijri Calendar (UGHC) was formulated at a meeting of experts in Istanbul in 2016 with the aim of synchronizing the calendar system globally. However, he doubts its implementation because it is not yet clear who the authority will be to regulate and coordinate the system. Khafid emphasized that the success of a global calendar requires a strong authority, similar to the example during the Caliphate of Umar bin Khattab in officially establishing the Hijri calendar.[25]

As the majority of scholars also state, if several regions are governed by a head of state or government, even if they are far apart, if the head of state or government has announced the start of fasting based on the sighting that has been conducted in one of the regions under their authority, then all Muslims in that country are obliged to follow the government's decree. [26]

3. Analysis of the Relevance and Implication of Imam Shafi'i Views in the Contemporary Context

Development of efforts to unify the Hijri calendar is still in the process of searching for a formulation that can be widely accepted, including in Indonesia. These efforts are evident in the attempts to unify the methods and criteria for determining the beginning of the lunar month, considering that the compromise between the criteria of the visibility of the crescent moon and the possibility of sighting has not yet fully reached a mutually agreed point. [27]

[24] Khafid, "'33 Catatn LFNU Untuk Konsep Kalender Hijriyah Global Tunggal (KHGT)'" (Bandung, 2024).

[25] Muhammad Syakir NF, "Alasan NU Tidak Terapkan Kalender Hijriah Global Tunggal," NU Online, 2025, https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/alasan-nu-tidak-terapkan-kalender-hijriah-global-tunggal?.

[26] Meri Fitri Yanti, "Pendapat Empat Mazhab Tentang Mathla' Dalam Penentuan Awal Bulan Hijriyah" (Institut Agama Islam Negeri Raden Intan, 2017).

[27] Anisah Budiwati, "Telaah Awal Kalender Hijriah Global Tunggal Jamaluddin ' Abd Al-Razik (Sebuah Upaya Menuju Unifikasi Kalender)," *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 10, no. 3 (2017): 407–30, https://jurnalbimasislam.kemenag.go.id/jbi/article/view/29/28.

Imam Syafi'i's view on determining the beginning of the lunar month is based on the method of rukyat al-hilal as the main foundation for setting the start of the month, as supported by the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) regarding the obligation to fast and break the fast based on the observation of the crescent moon. Additionally, the Shafi'i school also acknowledges the principle of ikhtilāf *al-maṭhali'*, which means the difference in the application of rukyat results based on the difference in the location of the moonrise. According to this view, rukyat that occurs in one region does not automatically apply to another region with a different *matla'*. [28]

When linked to the concept of the Global Unified Hijri Calendar (GHUC), it should be emphasized that Imam Shafi'i did not directly discuss the concept of a global calendar, as the idea had not developed during his time. Therefore, no explicit views of Imam Syafi'i regarding the Global Unified Hijri Calendar (KHGT) are found. However, thru an analytical approach to the principles of the Syafi'i school, it can be understood that the concept of KHGT has the potential to generate debate within the classical Syafi'i perspective. This is because KHGT aims at the unification of the Islamic calendar globally, whereas Imam Syafi'i's thot allows for the possibility of differing determinations of the beginning of the month based on the principle of *ikhtilāf al-maṭhali'*.

Historically, Imam Syafi'i's thoughts emerged at a time when rukyat, with direct observation using the naked eye, was the authentic and most feasible method for determining the beginning of the lunar month. The limitations of technology, the lack of communication facilities, and the underdevelopment of modern astronomy caused the information from the rukyat of one region to not be immediately disseminated to other regions. These conditions reinforce the relevance of the local matla' concept in the Shafi'i school, which states that the

[28] Ali Ahmad Nadwa, *Mausu'ah Al-Qawaid, Wa Ad-Dawabit Al-Fiqhiyah* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Alam al-Ma'rifah, 1999).

determination of the new moon is only binding for the area where the observation is made or regions with proximity to the *matla'.* [29]

The development of astronomical technology and the science of celestial navigation in the contemporary context opens new opportunities in understanding the relevance of Imam Syafi'i's views. The presence of telescopes, satellite imagery, astronomy software, and high-accuracy calculation systems allows for the observation of the crescent moon to be conducted with greater precision and scientifically verified. This modern technology should not be understood as a replacement for rukyat, but rather as a supporting instrument that strengthens the validity of hilal observation. This approach is in line with Imam Shafi'i's methodological framework, which places rukyat as the primary method, while hisab can be positioned as a supporting tool to determine the possibility of sighting the hilal (*imkan al-rukyat*). [30]

KHGT In contemporary studies, it emerges as one of the proposed solutions to the problem of differing moon sighting determinations in the Islamic world. KHGT supporters argue that the development of modern astronomy allows for the creation of a global Islamic calendar that provides certainty in worship times, administrative ease, and unity among Muslims across countries.[31] However, the idea still requires an in-depth study from the perspective of the classical Shafi'i school, particularly regarding its alignment with the principle of ikhtilāf *al-maṭhali',* which is one of the important characteristics in Imam Shafi'i's thought.

Thru Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement approach, the relevance of Imam Shafi'i's thot can be understood not in terms of direct support for KHGT, but rather in the methodological principles he bequeathed, such as caution (iḥtiyaṭ), the validity of observation, and the flexibility of ijtihad in responding to the changes

[29] Muhammad Alwi Musyafa, "Penentuan Awal Bulan Islam Menurut Mazhab Syafi'i," *Elfalaky: Jurnal Ilmu Falak* 4, no. 2 (2020): 158–69.

[30] Abdur Rokhim, "Tafsir Kontekstual Dalam Penetapan Awal Bulan Hijriyah Antara Hisab Dan Ruyah," *Mumtaz: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Keislaman*, Vol.1, no. 2, (2019).

[31] Thomas Djamaluddin, *Menuju Penyatuan Kalender Hijriah Indonesia* (Jakarta: LAPAN, 2011): 45–50.

of the times. [32] This approach allows for the reinterpretation of classical fiqh principles by considering the historical context of law formation as well as the needs of modern Muslim society. Thus, the development of astronomical technology can serve as a space for dialog between classical fiqh traditions and contemporary global needs without abandoning the normative foundations established by the school scholars.

D. Conlusions

The development of the Islamic calendar in Indonesia shows ongoing efforts to harmonize the criteria for determining the beginning of the lunar month, particularly between the approaches of wujūd al-hilāl and imkān al-ru'yah, although full agreement has not yet been reached. Analysis of Imam al-Syafi'i's thoughts in al-Umm emphasizes that rukyat is the main basis with the recognition of the principle of ikhtilāf al-maṭāliʿ, which allows for differences between regions. In the modern context, advancements in astronomy allow rukyat to be reinforced by accurate instruments and calculations, thus opening up space for the integration of both. This is reflected in the application of the imkān al-ru'yah criteria in Indonesia as a form of synthesis between normative and scientific approaches. Thus, the fiqh principles of Imam as-Shafi'i remain relevant and can be contextually reinterpreted to support the realization of a more integrated Hijri Calendar without abandoning the principles of Sharia.

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[32] Ahmad Junaidi, "Memadukan Rukyatul Hilal Dengan Perkembangan Sains," *Jurnal MADANIA* 22, no. 1 (2018): 145–58.

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