

Optimizing the Role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' *Hisab Rukyat* Team in Implementing *Rukyatul Hilal*

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Abstract

This research is based on the determination of the hijri year carried out through an isbat session conducted by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. In the isbat session, it was carried out after the *Rukyat Hisab* team at the designated location points throughout Indonesia. The determination of the testimony of the *Rukyat hilal* is an important foundation in determining the beginning of the month of Kamariah. This study examines the role of the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City to provide concrete recommendations in its role in determining the *Rukyat hilal*. This research is a qualitative field research. The provisional results of the study show that based on Article 52 A of Law No. 3 of 2006, it guarantees that the Ministry of Religion has the authority to carry out the *Rukyat hilal* in the month of komariah. However, how is the coordination with related institutions, and what are the obstacles faced in its implementation. The strategic role of the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City in determining the beginning of the hijri month scientifically and sharia, as well as the efforts that can be made to increase the effectiveness and credibility of its implementation in the future.

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A. Introduction

The transition of the Religious Court was officially on June 30, 2004, but the task of determining *Hisab* and *Rukyat* was not delegated to the Supreme Court. However, it is still under the authority of the Ministry of Religion.[1] The transfer of the Religious Courts into the organization of the Supreme Court does not relinquish its authority to determine and decide the problems of the ummah related to *Hisab-Rukyat*.[2]

Reform of Islamic law in the Religious Courts with the authority to examine and adjudicate, the Religious Courts are required to determine the testimony of a witness to *Rukyatul hilal* in determining the beginning of Ramadan and the beginning of Shawwal. It is stated in Article 52/A of Law No. 3/2006 amendments to Law No. 7 of 1989 concerning Religious Courts that the Religious Court has the authority to provide isbat of the testimony of the *Rukyat hilal* in

determining the hijri year.[3] The Religious Court is requested by the Ministry of Religious Affairs to decide on isbat on the testimony of *Rukyat hilal* every hijri month such as the months of Ramadan, Shawwal and Zulhijjah.[4]

Problems related to the absolute authority of the Religious Court are related to the things that occur in the worship activities of Muslims in the determination of the beginning of the month of Ramadan, the beginning of the month of Shawwal and Zulhijjah which are always a social debate. The method of determining *Hisab Rukyat* is the basis for organizational differences. This makes several institutions that have the authority to perform the *Rukyat hilal* at the beginning of the month in the Ministry of Religion and the government. The authority of the Religious Court requires certainty and determination that plays an important role in carrying out the isbat of *Rukyatul hilal* testimony.[5]

Legally, the testimony of the *Rukyat hilal* can be accepted after conducting an examination. Belief and basic knowledge about the testimony of *Rukyat hilal* for a *peRukyat*. Therefore, to launch and order the examination, taking the oath and deciding the isbat *Rukyat hilal*, it is necessary to have the provisions of judicial administration that are determined. Based on this, the researcher is interested in conducting research related to the implementation of the absolute authority of the Religious Court in providing isbat of *Rukyat hilal* testimony at the Padangsidempuan City Religious Court.[6]

B. Method

This research is carried out with a series of scientific activities to obtain answers to problems to research new knowledge discoveries. By using qualitative methods, to describe from the perspective of the research informant. The case study approach or field research is part of the research evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation can be used to collect systematic research data on how the series of research activities and characteristics are.[7]

Evaluation of the research with a description of the data obtained regarding the explanation of the implementation of the absolute authority of the religious court in providing isbat of *Rukyat hilal* testimony at the Religious Court of Padangsidempuan City. This study is in accordance with qualitative research that has a research flow with the discovery of descriptive data and analysis in accordance with the results of interviews from sources and observations. The approach that uses data description has been evaluated with a hermeneutic approach.[8]

The study in this study has a study object that reviews how the ideal guidelines for the implementation of isbat of *Hisab Rukyat* testimony at the Religious Court of Padangsidempuan City. As well as reviewing how the absolute authority of the religious court in providing isbat of *Hisab Rukyat* testimony at the Religious Court of Padangsidempuan City. The background of the informants in the study became a research sample, namely the Judge of the Religious Court of the Religious Court of Padangsidempuan City, the Registrar, and the *Hisab Rukyat* Team of the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City who have a role in determining the isbat of *Hisab Rukyat* in the City of Padangsidempuan.

The location of the research is a location related to the research, namely the Religious Court of Padangsidempuan City and the Office of the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City. Data collection through resource persons is carried out in three ways, namely: interviews that are carried out in depth with an open-ended question format. Data from interviews are direct quotes obtained from experienced experts, have opinions, feelings and knowledge.[9] Interviews with a non-structured, free and open nature aim to make it easier for informants to understand the questions from the researcher.[10] Data observation was carried out to describe matters related to the rules regarding the mechanism of isbat of *Rukyat hilal* testimony, then the role of the *Rukyat Hisab* team of the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City in the testimony of *Rukyat hilal*.

Documentation is carried out by indexed and measurable data collection techniques.[11] Documentation is intended to collect data through archives or documentation in the form of reports on the implementation of isbat *Rukyat hilal*, or scientific data on geographical conditions, as well as other matters related to this research. Analysis is an activity that uses data so that the truth or falsehood of the initial hypothesis of the research can be obtained. This analysis requires imagination and creativity so that the researcher's ability to analyze the problem can be tested.[12] Data analysis can be used by researchers as a guideline for reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions.

C. Results and Discussion

The Role of the Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the City of Padangsidempuan

The role of the *Hisab Rukyat* Team of the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City is considered very strategic and makes a positive contribution to the community. According to the

source, the existence of the team is at the forefront of ensuring the accuracy of determining the beginning of the Hijri month, such as the beginning of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha. This is important considering that the Islamic calendar has a different dating system from the Christian calendar, so it is necessary to observe the *Rukyat hilal* and calculate the *Hisab* so that Muslims obtain accurate and valid information according to the Shari'ah.[13]

In addition, the public always waits for official information about the start of fasting and the implementation of worship such as tarawih and suhoor. This information is then disseminated through various media and institutions, such as schools, thus further strengthening the urgency of the role of the *Hisab Rukyat* team. The resource person emphasized that without a special team that carries out *Hisab* and *Rukyat*, people will experience confusion in determining worship related to the hijri calendar.[14]

The *Hisab Rukyat* team also has an educational function in the development of astronomy or Islamic astronomy. The practice of *Hisab* and *Rukyat* in determining the *hilal* also maintains the continuity of astronomy based on mathematics and astronomy, such as the use of the concepts of sine, cosine, and tangents. Thus, the implementation of *Rukyat hilal* is not only the determination of the date of worship, but also the preservation of science in the Islamic tradition.[15]

The absence of an isbat session at the Padangsidempuan City Religious Court is due to the location of the *hilal* vision carried out in the Central Tapanuli area. And since 2021 until now, he has never seen the new moon directly. Then, the trial has also been carried out in the field or at the location right after the sight of the *hilal*. So, the team still invited representatives from the Padangsidempuan City Religious Court as well as representatives from the Central Tapanuli Religious Court as hosts.

Analysis of the Role of THR in Implementing *Rukyatul Hilal*

The implementation of the *Rukyat hilal* by the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City has been carried out consistently from 2021 to 2024. This activity is carried out every year three times, namely for the determination of the beginning of Ramadan, the determination of 1 Shawwal (Eid al-Fitr), and the determination of 10 Zulhijah (Eid al-Adha) by the *Hisab Rukyat* (THR) Team. The *Hisab Rukyat* Team of the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City consists of 25 people consisting of elements of the City Government (Pemko), internal Ministry

of Religion itself, Islamic community organizations (Islamic organizations), and representatives of the Religious Court. Technical instructions for the implementation of *Rukyat hilal* at the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City. guided by the Regulation of the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia Number 2 of 2022 concerning *Rukyatul Hilal* and the Determination of the Beginning of the Hijri Month. The technical guidelines cover several aspects, including:[16]

- a. Monitoring location standards that must meet the requirements of visibility and minimal light pollution;
- b. Observation techniques use *Hisab* (astronomical calculations) and *Rukyat* (direct observation) methods;
- c. Observation equipment, such as telescopes, theodolites, CCD cameras, and other supports;
- d. The procedure for reporting the results of *Rukyat* must be submitted in stages to the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion and forwarded to the Minister of Religion through the isbat session;
- e. The person in charge and the involvement of related institutions, including BMKG, Religious Courts, Regional Governments, and Islamic organizations.

The technical implementation of the implementation of *Rukyatul hilal* begins with the calculation of *Hisab* to determine the possible visibility of the *hilal*. The calculation includes the height of the new moon above the horizon and the time of the first crescent moon after sunset. The resource person said that the height of the *hilal* is generally in the range of about 3 degrees above the horizon when observations are made.[17]

After the *Hisab* data was obtained, the team then conducted field observations to the designated *hilal* monitoring location, namely the seaside area in Hajoran, Central Tapanuli. Observations are carried out precisely at the time in accordance with the results of the astronomical calculations that have been prepared in advance. In the observation activities, the team used various supporting equipment such as theodolites, calibrated compasses, drones, and telescopes (binoculars) to determine the direction and ensure the position of the *hilal* according to the parameters that have been calculated. The equipment functions to increase the accuracy of the direction of vision and increase the chances of success in seeing the *hilal*. Overall, the technical process of implementing *Rukyat hilal* is carried out with a combination of integrated *Hisab* and

Rukyat methods to obtain valid results both scientifically and sharia.

A report on the implementation of the *Rukyat hilal* is made every time the observation activity is completed. The report is submitted to the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion and then by the Religious Court will be forwarded to the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia as part of the process of the national isbat hearing. However, from 2021 to 2024, the *Hisab Rukyat* team of the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City has never seen the *hilal* in person during the implementation of the *Rukyat hilal*. This situation causes the reports sent to always be in the form of a negative report even though *Rukyat* activities continue to run according to procedures.[18]

The determination of the time for the implementation of *Rukyatul hilal* by the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City refers to the schedule set in the national isbat session. After the official decision and schedule were issued, the team then made preparations for the observation of the new moon according to these provisions, especially for the determination of the beginning of Ramadan. Thus, the implementation time follows the direction of the central government and is not determined independently by the regions. The location of the *Rukyatul hilal* is consistently carried out in Hajoran, which is seen as the most ideal observation point in the Padangsidempuan area. The location was chosen because it has a good enough horizon condition for the visibility of the new moon and its distance is not too far from the Office of the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City, thus facilitating the mobilization of observation teams and equipment.

The stages of implementing the *Rukyatul hilal* began from the time the team arrived at the observation location. The first step is to prepare all astronomical observation equipment and ensure that the technical conditions are ready for use. After that, the team coordinated the presence of all parties involved, including representatives of Islamic organizations, the Ministry of Religion, the Religious Court, and the City Government, by first distributing brochures and technical information related to the implementation of *Rukyat*.

Before the observation was made, the resource person provided an explanation of the relevant *Hisab* data, such as the time of the likely occurrence of *ijtimak* and the estimated visibility of the *hilal*, such as the example given that the *hilal* is estimated to be in the range of 18.31 to 19.00 WIB. The observation process generally lasts for approximately 30 minutes. If the new moon is successfully seen in this range, it can be determined that the next day is the beginning of

Ramadan or any other specified Hijri month.[19]

Furthermore, if there is a witness who states that he has seen the *hilal*, the Religious Court will swear an oath to the witness. The questions asked include the position of the *hilal*, color, direction, and other visual features. Endorsement can only be given if the testimony submitted is in accordance with the scientific provisions and rules of astronomy that have been studied by the previous team. If the testimony is declared valid, then the results of *Rukyat* can be immediately guided so that the community can immediately carry out worship such as tarawih prayers at night.

On the other hand, if the *hilal* is not successfully seen, then the team is waiting for an official decision from the Minister of Religion through a national isbat session. Thus, all actions carried out are a form of implementing operational standards that have been regulated in the technical instructions of *Rukyatul hilal* in Indonesia. Some of the obstacles faced by the *Hisab Rukyat* Team in carrying out the *Rukyatul hilal* in Padangsidempuan City. The main obstacle has to do with funding limitations. The lack of budget support has an impact on the limited procurement of observation equipment and financing of participants invited to the activity. A number of devices used to this day still come from the personal property of team members. In fact, the implementation of *Rukyat* requires astronomical instruments that are not only complete but also have high accuracy standards.

In addition to the budget, the weather factor is the biggest challenge. The resource person revealed that it is not uncommon for the *hilal Rukyat* activities to be hampered by rain when the team arrives at the observation location. Natural constellations such as cloud thickness and high water evaporation rates have a significant effect on the low visibility of the *hilal*. The resource person gave an illustration that seeing the new moon is like trying to find a thread behind the glass. If atmospheric conditions are not favorable, observation efforts will be very difficult even if all equipment is well prepared.[20]

Meanwhile, for device matters, the team has actually prepared equipment since before departure and ensured that all technical needs are ready at the location. If there is something missing, the team will complete it first at the office. But again, the weather factor is the final determinant of the success of the *Rukyatul hilal*. Thus, the main obstacles in the implementation of the *Rukyat hilal* in Padangsidempuan include limited funding for strengthening equipment and facility support, as well as weather conditions that often do not support the observation process.

The implementation of *Rukyatul hilal* in Padangsidempuan City has been carried out optimally by the existing *Hisab Rukyat* Team. However, there is a need to increase the capacity of the team so that the *hilal* observation process can produce more accurate and credible data. Currently, the team only has six people who are really experts in the field of *Hisab* and *Rukyat*, while the number of participants who attend *Rukyat* activities is relatively large but more like witnesses.

The main obstacle faced is the availability of observation facilities and infrastructure. Some of the equipment used is still personal to the team members, and the cost of procuring astronomical observation devices is quite high. Equipment such as compasses must also have accuracy standards and be well calibrated. The resource person stated that there are still many modern devices that should be used to improve the precision of observation, such as telescopes equipped with digital tracking, CCD cameras, observation theodolites, and support devices for the direction of the Qibla and horizon.

Therefore, from the perspective of the resource person, ideally the *Hisab Rukyat* Team of the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City needs to be supported by more complete and adequate equipment facilities. Strengthening falakiah human resources is also needed so that the team is able to produce more quality *Rukyat* reports, can be accounted for scientifically and sharia, and increases public trust in the results of the determination of the beginning of the Hijri month.

D. Conclusion

The Ministry of Religion is a government institution that has the authority and responsibility in the implementation of *Rukyatul hilal* and the determination of the beginning of the hijri month nationally. Through the Directorate of Islamic Religious Affairs and Sharia Development, the Ministry of Religion routinely organizes *Rukyatul hilal* at various observation points throughout Indonesia. The results of these observations were then discussed in the Isbat Session with representatives of Islamic organizations, BMKG, LAPAN, and other related institutions, before finally being officially determined by the government.

However, in practice, the implementation of *Rukyatul hilal* still faces various challenges, especially by the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City related to the distance of the observation location which is quite far from the center of Padangsidempuan, so it takes quite a lot of time and money. As well as the limitations of modern observation equipment so that it is a factor that hinders the observation of the new moon.

Seeing the importance of the role of the Ministry of Religion in maintaining the unity of the ummah and the accuracy of the implementation of *Rukyatul hilal*, it is necessary to conduct a more in-depth study of the extent of the role of the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City in the implementation of *Rukyatul hilal*, how it coordinates with related institutions, and what obstacles are faced in its implementation. The strategic role of the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City in determining the beginning of the hijri month scientifically and sharia, as well as the efforts that can be made to increase the effectiveness and credibility of its implementation in the future.

That THR (*Hisab Rukyat* Team) data at the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City has been collected in general, but it still needs to be processed and adjusted to the data from the results of interviews with the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City. That the interviews that have been conducted related to the role of THR are very important in carrying out *Rukyatul hilal*, because THR is the main part of the Ministry of Religion which is tasked with carrying out *Rukyatul hilal*. Generally, this *Rukyatul hilal* is carried out 3 times in one year, and THR must be able to formulate or master *Hisab* data and the operation of *Rukyat* observation tools. And THR needs to master the field of *Hisab Rukyat*, in order to optimize the implementation of the determination of the beginning of the hijri month and is outlined in the form of a report on the implementation of *Rukyatul hilal* through the city ministry of religion, then to the provincial ministry of religion to the central ministry of religion. The results of the study show how the role of the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City based on data collected at the Ministry of Religion of Padangsidempuan City experienced several challenges and obstacles in carrying out *Rukyatul hilal*.

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