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METHODS IN DETERMINING NEW HIJRI MONTH: A THEMATIC REVIEW FROM ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Discussions on determining the start of the new Hijri month have persisted for centuries, shaping not only scholarly discourse but also national governance and religious cohesion. These debates often lead to divisions as different methods for establishing the Hijri date are advocated. This paper provides a thematic review of the key arguments between two primary positions: those who adhere strictly to lunar crescent sighting and reject astronomical calculations, and those who support a combined approach. The review examines three central hadith-based concepts: the definition of "sighting", the implications of *istikmāl* and *faqdurūlah*, and the interpretation of *ummi*. By engaging with the views of scholars such as al-Albani, Qaradawi, and others, this study presents a broad analysis that reflects the diversity of opinions in Islamic jurisprudence. The research is based on a systematic review of relevant literature, sourced primarily from Google Scholar due to the limited availability of these discussions in more widely indexed databases. The findings highlight the strength of arguments on both sides, emphasizing the complexity of the issue. While many existing studies tend to favor a particular stance—either an exclusive reliance on visual sighting or the adoption of astronomical calculations—this study takes a neutral and comprehensive approach. By presenting both perspectives objectively, it fills a gap in the literature, where discussions often lean toward one viewpoint. This study contributes to ongoing discussions on Hijri calendar determination by providing a balanced reference for policymakers, researchers, and scholars working toward a more consistent and widely accepted framework. The review underscores the need for continued dialogue and research, particularly in addressing the varied contexts of the global Muslim community. In doing so, it aims to support a more inclusive and informed approach to Hijri calendar determination, integrating both traditional methods and modern advancements.

Introduction

The determination of the new Hijri month is traditionally based on the sighting of the lunar crescent, a practice deeply rooted in Islamic tradition (Subki, 1992). This method originates from the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), as narrated by ʻAbd Allāh bin ʻUmar (RA). The hadith emphasises the importance of physically observing the lunar crescent to mark the beginning of a new month, a practice that has been upheld for centuries within the Islamic community.

> Translation: Allah's Messenger mentioned Ramaḍān and spoke: "Do not fast unless you see the crescent (of Ramaḍān), and do not give up fasting till you see the crescent (of Shawwāl), but if the sky is overcast (if you cannot see it), then act on estimation (i.e., count Shaʻbān as 30 days)".
>
> (Sahih Al-Bukhārī, n.d., Hadith 1983)

Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī argued that the hadith indicates that the determination of a new Hijri month should be based on the sighting of the lunar crescent on the 29th day of the Hijri month. If the crescent is not sighted, whether due to cloudy skies or other hindrances, the month is to be completed as 30 days (al-ʻAsqalānī, 1993). As Islamic territories expanded across various regions and nations, the practice of determining the Hijri month evolved (Faid et al., 2023). While the traditional method relied solely on the physical sighting of the lunar crescent, modern practices have shifted towards estimating the parameters of a lunar crescent sighting on the 29th of each Hijri month. This approach, known as lunar crescent visibility criteria, facilitates the planning of the yearly Hijri calendar for Muslims and helps address inconsistencies in reports of lunar crescent visibility (Al-Qaraḍāwī, 1994; Yusuf, 2010). The estimation of lunar crescent visibility involves analysing a vast collection of data from lunar crescent observations (Faid et al., 2024; Faid et al., 2023; Faid et al., 2022; Mohd Nawawi et al., 2015). A significant amount of observational data is required to ensure the reliability of the visibility criteria, making it a crucial aspect of modern Hijri month determination (Ahmad et al., 2020; Mustapha et al., 2024).

While several countries have adopted lunar crescent visibility criteria for determining the start of the new Hijri month, there remain scholars who reject the use of visibility criteria as the basis for this determination, insisting instead on the exclusive use of lunar crescent sighting. Brunei, for instance, strictly adheres to lunar crescent sighting for determining the months of Ramaḍān, Shawwāl, and Dhū al-Hijjah, even though it employs visibility criteria for the other Hijri months. The debate over which method should be used to determine the new Hijri month has persisted for centuries, dating back to before the publication of Ibn Hajar al-ʻAsqalānī's *Fatḥ al-Bārī* in 1414H. This scholarly discussion continues to this day, with no definitive consensus in sight. The enduring nature of this debate reflects the complexity and significance of the issue within the Islamic tradition (Nawawi et al., 2024).

The determination of the new Hijri month has been a topic of significant scholarly debate, with discussions centred on the most appropriate method to follow. Scholars like Nordin (2010), Nawawi (2014), Azhari (2012, 2015), and Wahid (2021) have explored this issue within the Malaysian and Indonesian context, advocating for the use of lunar crescent visibility criteria to streamline the process of determining the new Hijri month. Nordin's work, for instance, highlights the impact of these criteria on the implementation of the Hijri and Gregorian calendars and their implications for zakat calculations (M. S. Faid, Nawawi, et al., 2023). Similarly, Nawawi provides a detailed analysis of Islamic scholars' arguments from an Islamic astronomy perspective, focusing on the use of lunar crescent visibility criteria. However, both scholars' discussions are largely confined to Malaysia and Indonesia, leaving the broader applicability of these criteria in other Islamic countries unexplored (Faid et al., 2024).

On the other hand, scholars like Yusuf (2010) and Shah (2009) have engaged in more intense debates, presenting rigorous arguments from the perspective of Islamic astronomy. Hamza Yusuf firmly supports lunar crescent sighting as the sole method for determining the new Hijri month, while Zulfiqar Ali Shah argues for a more inclusive approach that allows for other methods alongside lunar crescent sighting. Their discussions, while robust, highlight the complexity and significance of this issue within Islamic astronomy, as noted by (Schaefer, 1988). Despite some resolution of this issue in Malaysia, the debate remains prevalent in countries like Pakistan, the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Indonesia, and the

United States (US). This ongoing relevance underscores the need for a comprehensive examination of the arguments surrounding the determination of the new Hijri month.

This paper aims to offer a neutral and comprehensive thematic review of the arguments presented by scholars on the method of determining the new Hijri month, focusing on three key themes: the definition of *hilāl* (the new crescent moon), the interpretation of sighting, the implications of *istikmāl* and *faqdurū lah*, and the concept of *ummī*. The review deliberately avoids any preference for cultural, national, or historical perspectives, instead focusing solely on religious and jurisprudential aspects. This approach seeks to provide a balanced view of the differing scholarly positions, ensuring objectivity and neutrality. The thematic review aims to serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, researchers, and scholars interested in the determination of the Hijri month. By providing a comprehensive database of scholarly opinions on this issue, the review seeks to aid in the formulation of arguments and the development of methodologies for Hijri calendar determination. This work aspires to contribute meaningfully to the ongoing discourse, offering insights that can guide future research and policy development in the field of Islamic astronomy and calendar determination.

Methodology

This research adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology to conduct a thematic review based on the interpretation of three specific hadith terms: *ru'yah* (lunar crescent sighting), *istikmāl* (completing the month), and *ummī* (illiteracy). These hadith terms are central to the determination of the new Hijri month, and the study aims to analyse how prominent scholars, including al-Albānī (1983), al-Qaraḍāwī (2005), Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (1993), and others, have interpreted these hadiths. The goal is to produce a thematic review that categorises and synthesises the various scholarly perspectives on these terms, providing a focused understanding of their implications for Islamic jurisprudence. The research is designed to limit its scope to the textual analysis of these three hadiths without incorporating broader Islamic legal principles like *maqāṣid* (objectives of Sharia) or *maṣlaḥah* (public interest). By concentrating exclusively on the hadith texts themselves and their interpretations by recognised scholars, the study aims to provide a clear and precise examination of how these key hadiths have been understood and applied in the determination of the new Hijri month.

The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) protocol is adopted to ensure a rigorous, transparent, and structured approach in selecting, analysing, and synthesising scholarly interpretations (Kitchenham, 2004). Unlike narrative reviews, an SLR follows a predefined methodology, ensuring that all relevant sources are systematically identified and reviewed (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015). This is particularly crucial in the study of Hijri calendar determination, as existing discussions are often fragmented across classical Islamic texts (Ibn Ḥajar, 1993), modern jurisprudential opinions (Al-Qaraḍāwī, 2005), and scientific studies. By using SLR, this research minimizes bias, ensures a comprehensive thematic analysis, and enhances reproducibility, allowing future studies to build upon its findings (Tranfield et al., 2003). Additionally, given the tendency of past research to lean towards specific legal schools or pre-established conclusions, this study utilises SLR to provide a neutral, balanced, and well-documented review of the key hadiths, highlighting the diversity of scholarly thought within Islamic jurisprudence.

The literature for this review is primarily sourced from Google Scholar (Beel et al., 2010), which offers a wide range of accessible scholarly materials, including articles, books, and conference papers. Given that many relevant Islamic studies sources may not be indexed in databases like Scopus or Web of Science (Hood & Wilson, 2001), Google Scholar provides a comprehensive platform for identifying the most pertinent scholarly works. The selection criteria focus on literature that directly addresses the interpretations of the hadith terms *ru'yah*, *istikmāl*, and *ummī* by influential Islamic scholars, ensuring that the review reflects authoritative views within the field of Islamic jurisprudence (Ibn Rushd, 2006; Al-Subkī, 1998).

The research methodology involves a systematic search strategy using specific keywords such as *"ru'yah* hadith interpretation" (Al-Albānī, 1983), "*istikmāl* in hadith" (Al-Subkī, 1998), and *"ummī* and Hijri month determination" (Al-Munāwī, 1972) to locate relevant literature. An initial screening process reviews titles and abstracts to identify studies that focus on the interpretation of these hadith terms by prominent scholars (Moher et al., 2009). Those selected for inclusion undergo a full-text review, allowing

for detailed extraction of information regarding the scholars' interpretations and thematic categorisation (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

The data extracted from these sources are analysed to identify common themes and variations in interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This thematic synthesis will highlight how these interpretations have influenced traditional and contemporary methods of determining the new Hijri month (Shākir, 1992; Zulfiqar Ali Shah, 2009). The analysis will compare scholarly views, particularly in how they reconcile traditional practices with modern methodologies, such as the use of astronomical calculations (Shah, 2004; Muṣṭafā Aḥmad al-Zarqā', 1986).

Quality assessment of the selected literature is conducted to ensure the inclusion of high-quality sources that make substantial scholarly contributions (Gough, 2007). By focusing on the interpretations of prominent scholars, the study aims to ensure that its conclusions are grounded in well-established Islamic jurisprudential thought (Ibn Ḥajar, 1993; Ibn Qutaybah, 1998). The research is expected to produce a thematic review that significantly contributes to the ongoing discourse on the determination of the Hijri month (Al-Qaraḍāwī, 2005; Al-Dīn al-'Aynī, 1996).

The findings will be valuable to policymakers, researchers, and scholars in Islamic studies, providing a robust framework for understanding the interplay between traditional Islamic practices and contemporary scientific methodologies (Shah, 2004). Additionally, the results may guide future research on how Islamic jurisprudence can adapt to modern challenges while remaining rooted in classical sources (Al-Subkī, 1998; Al-Dhahabī, 1999).

Quran and Hadith Proposition in Determination of New Hijri Month

Ru'yah al-hilāl, or the sighting of the lunar crescent, is a practice observed by Muslims to determine the beginning of a new Hijri month. This practice is deeply rooted in both the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Qur'an highlights the lunar crescent as a physical sign for determining the new Hijri month, as indicated in Surah al-Baqarah, verse 189 (Al-Qaraḍāwī, 2006). In this verse, Allah says*:*

> Translation: They ask you, (O Muhammad), about the new moons. Say, "They are measurements of time for the people and for Hajj". And it is not righteousness to enter houses from the back, but righteousness is (in) one who fears Allah. And enter houses from their doors. And fear Allah that you may succeed.
>
> (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:189)

An investigation into the context of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) reveals two primary records concerning the occasion of the revelation of this verse from Surah al-Baqarah, verse 189. First, it is recorded that the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) inquired about the physical condition of the moon, specifically noting its phases—how it begins as a thin crescent, gradually thickens until it becomes a full moon, and then returns to its original thin crescent shape (al-Zamakhsharī, 1987).

Second, the Prophet (SAW) was asked about the purpose behind the creation of the moon itself (Ibn Kathīr, 1999). These inquiries prompted the revelation of the verse, which explains that the lunar phases serve as measurements of time for people, particularly in the context of determining the months and the timing of religious observances such as *Ḥajj*. Al- Tāfī (2005) identifies two main questions that prompted the revelation of Surah al-Baqarah, verse 189. The first question concerns the physical changes of the moon, from its initial thin crescent shape to a full sphere and back again. The second question addresses the wisdom of Allah in the creation of the moon.

Al-'Aṭāfī concedes that the second question is more fitting in the context of the verse's revelation. This conclusion is drawn from the subsequent answer provided by Allah in the verse, which refers to the moon as a sign for measuring time and dates, particularly for the commencement of Hajj. This indicates that Allah's response directly addresses the question about the purpose and wisdom behind the moon's creation, emphasizing its role as a natural marker for the Islamic calendar and religious observances.

Al-Nasafī (2011) notes that this verse clarifies that the Islamic legal ruling regarding the month will be determined by the lunar calendar instead of the solar calendar. Abū Bakr al-'Arabī in this verse commentary, states that the wisdom behind the creation of the sun and moon is that both objects are to be assigned time measurement. He states the sun is for worldly time measurement, and the moon is for religious time measurement (Al-'Arabī 1988). Hamza Yusuf (2010) adds that the use of the phrase *mawāqīt* in the verse indicates that time is used for a specific occasion; in this case, the moon is used for time measurement in religious matters. Al-Andalūsī (2000) and al-Ṭabarī (2000) add that the general summation of the verse exegesis is that the moon phases are is practical for determining the time and date of the Hijri month and issues relate to *munākaḥāt* and *mu'āmalāt*. It is the wisdom of Allah to create the moon's appearance tied to its lunar phases. This contrasts with the physical appearance of the sun, which is constant as a bright yellow sphere throughout the year. This makes the creation of the moon influential for human life in timekeeping, as evidenced by the Babylonian, Hebrew, Christian, and especially Muslim traditions.

In the application of the lunar crescent for determining the new Hijri month, there is an ongoing discussion regarding the use of astronomical calculations (*ḥisāb*), the sighting of the lunar crescent (*ru'yah*), or the lunar crescent visibility criterion. Each of these methods is supported by strong, valid arguments and evidence drawn from *maṣādir al-sharī'ah* (sources of Islamic law). The differences in these approaches stem from varying interpretations of three key issues. The first issue concerns the hadith that instructs rounding off the month to 30 days (*istikmāl*) in cases where there is a hindrance to observing the lunar crescent. An example of this is the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), as narrated by Abū Hurayrah (RA).

> Translation: The Prophet, or Abū al-Qāsim, said. "Start fasting on seeing the crescent (of Ramaḍān) and give up fasting on seeing the crescent (of Shawwāl), and if the sky is overcast (and you cannot see it), complete thirty days of Sha'bān".
>
> (Sahih Al-Bukhari, n.d., Hadith 1983)

This hadith serves as a foundational reference for scholars who advocate different methods for determining the new Hijri month. The second key issue involves the hadith that suggests the practice of estimation (*faqdurū lah*) in the event of a hindrance during a lunar crescent observation. An example of this is the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), as narrated by 'Abd Allāh bin 'Umar (RA).

> Translation: Allah's Messenger mentioned Ramaḍān and said, "Do not fast unless you see the crescent (of Ramaḍān), and do not give up fasting till you see the crescent (of Shawwāl), but if the sky is overcast (if you cannot see it), then act on estimation (i.e., count Sha'bān as 30 days)."
>
> (Sahih Al-Bukhari, n.d., Hadith 1983)

This hadith is often cited by scholars who support the use of estimation or calculation when direct observation of the lunar crescent is not possible, further contributing to the diversity of opinions on how to determine the start of the new Hijri month. The third issue centres around the hadith that describes the Muslim communities during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as *ummī*—communities that were largely illiterate and incapable of reading and writing. Because of this, the Prophet decided that the new Hijri month should be determined by the sighting of the lunar crescent, with each month having a length of either 29 or 30 days. This guidance is derived from a saying of the Prophet, as narrated by 'Abd Allāh bin 'Umar (RA).

> Translation: We are an illiterate nation; we neither write nor know accounts. The month is like this and this, i.e., sometimes of 29 days and sometimes of 30 days.
>
> (Sahih Al-Bukhari, n.d., Hadith 1983)

This hadith is often referenced by scholars who emphasise the importance of maintaining the traditional practice of *ru'yah* (sighting) as the primary method for determining the beginning of the new Hijri month, reflecting the historical context in which this practice was established. The general meaning of these three hadiths suggests that the method for determining the new Hijri month should be either through the sighting

of the lunar crescent on the 29th day of a Hijri month or by rounding off the month to 30 days in the case of a hindrance or the crescent's invisibility. Scholars from the school of hadith, such as Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī (1993) and Badr al-Dīn al-ʻAynī (2001), reject the use of astronomical calculations to determine the new Hijri month. Their rejection is based on a literal interpretation of the hadith, which explicitly indicates that the new Hijri month should be determined solely by the sighting of the lunar crescent. In their view, rounding off the month to 30 days is only permissible when sighting the crescent is not possible due to hindrances or its invisibility. This perspective emphasises adherence to traditional practices as outlined in the hadith.

Some scholars interpret the word "*faqdurū lah*" as needing further clarification (*mujmal*). Consequently, they understand it to mean rounding off the Hijri month to 30 days in the case of hindrance (Al-Qurṭubī, 2003). This interpretation aligns with the first and second hadith, which indicate that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) did not consider astronomical calculations for determining the Hijri month. The reasoning behind this is that imposing complex calculations on the Muslim community at that time would have been burdensome, especially since only a small number of individuals were capable of performing accurate astronomical calculations. Given these circumstances, the Prophet's instruction to round off the Hijri month to 30 days was a practical and accessible solution for all Muslims, ensuring that the process of determining the new month remained straightforward and within the community's capabilities. This interpretation reinforces the understanding that the new Hijri month should be determined through the sighting of the lunar crescent, with the option to round off to 30 days only in cases where sighting is not possible. It underscores the emphasis on simplicity and accessibility in Islamic practices, as well as the preference for *ru'yah* (sighting) over astronomical calculations in this context.

The third hadith provide an additional perspective on the use of lunar crescent sighting for determining the new Hijri month. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) implied that, during his time, the majority of Muslims were not capable of reading, writing, or performing complex calculations. While there were indeed some Muslims who possessed these skills, their numbers were too few to undertake the intricate astronomical calculations necessary for determining the new Hijri month. As a result, the Prophet permitted the determination of the Hijri month through the simple and accessible method of lunar crescent sighting. In cases where the crescent could not be sighted due to hindrances, the Prophet instructed that the month should be rounded off to 30 days.

In summary, based on the hadiths mentioned, the established methods for determining the new Hijri month are: first, by attempting to sight the lunar crescent on the 29th day of the Hijri month, and second, if the crescent is not sighted due to hindrances, by rounding off the month to 30 days. This approach ensures that the process remains practical and feasible for all Muslims, reflecting the Prophet's emphasis on simplicity and accessibility in religious practices.

Thematic Reviews in Methods of Determining the New Hijri Month

The Islamic legal ruling on whether to use lunar crescent sighting or astronomical calculations to determine the Hijri month has been extensively debated, with definitive arguments rooted in the exegesis of hadith. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) instructed Muslims to rely on lunar crescent sighting for determining the start of a new Hijri month. This traditional method is widely supported by scholars who emphasise the hadith's clear guidance on this matter. However, some Islamic scholars argue that the use of astronomical calculations for determining the new Hijri month is also well-founded, both in terms of *sharīʻah* argumentation and practical considerations. They contend that while the Prophet's instructions were suited to the capabilities of the Muslim community at that time, modern advancements in astronomical knowledge offer a valid and practical alternative.

This section explores the key arguments from both perspectives—lunar crescent sighting and astronomical calculation—providing a thematic review of the methods used to determine the new Hijri month. By examining the strengths and challenges associated with each approach, this discussion aims to present a balanced understanding of the ongoing debate within the Islamic scholarly community.

Argumentation from the Definition of Sighting

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) used two specific terms to describe the lunar crescent sighting: *ru'yah* and *shahida*. These terms are consistently employed throughout the Qur'an and Hadith, and the Prophet did not use any other terms to describe the act of lunar crescent sighting. The consistent use of these terms suggests a particular interpretation of what constitutes the sighting of the lunar crescent.

The way scholars define *ru'yah* and *shahida* has significant implications for the method used to determine the new Hijri month. If *ru'yah* and *shahida* are defined as the act of sighting or witnessing the lunar crescent, either physically or with informed knowledge, then the new Hijri month could be determined through lunar crescent sighting, astronomical calculations, or the lunar crescent visibility criterion. This broader interpretation allows for flexibility in the methods used, accommodating both traditional and modern approaches.

On the other hand, if scholars define *ru'yah* and *shahida* strictly as the physical act of lunar crescent sighting, then the new Hijri month can only be determined by actually sighting the crescent moon. This more literal interpretation limits the method to traditional sighting practices, excluding the use of astronomical calculations or visibility criteria. Examples of these terms in the Qur'an and Hadith include:

> Translation: "The month of Ramaḍān [is that] in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion. So, whoever sights (the new moon of) the month, let him fast it; and whoever is ill or on a journey - then an equal number of other days. Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship and (wants) for you to complete the period and to glorify Allah for that (to) which He has guided you; and perhaps you will be grateful".
>
> (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:185)

Prophetic saying, narrated by 'Abd Allāh bin 'Umar (RA).

> Translation: Allah's Messenger mentioned Ramaḍān and said, "Do not fast unless you see the crescent (of Ramaḍān), and do not give up fasting till you see the crescent (of Shawwāl), but if the sky is overcast (if you cannot see it), then act on estimation (i.e., count Sha'bān as 30 days)".
>
> (Sahih Al-Bukhari, n.d., Hadith 1983)

Ru'yah, as defined by Ibn Manẓūr, refers to the act of seeing something with the eye, coupled with the perspective of knowledge. Ibn Manẓūr further elaborates that *ru'yah* involves more than just the physical act of sighting; it includes an element of critical thinking and insight. For instance, he describes *ru'yah* as how a scholar perceives something through the lens of scholastic knowledge, indicating that the act is not merely about observing but also about understanding the deeper meaning or insight behind what is seen.

Imam Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyyah elucidates the significance of the term *hilal* by emphasising that it denotes a phenomenon that is both witnessed and sighted by the eyes. He explains that the information obtained through direct observation is the most accurate, which is why the new crescent moon is called *hilal*. The root of the word *hilal* is associated with appearance and announcement, whether through listening or sighting. For example, the term *"ahalla"* is used when one raises their voice to chant the name of something other than Allah during slaughter, and similarly, pouring rain is referred to as *al-halall*, while a newborn's cry is described as *istahalla*. The common origin of these terms lies in the concept of raising the voice or making something conspicuous (Hallaq, 2001).

On the other hand, Bin Bāz (1995) argues that *ru'yah* in the hadith is a singular transitive verb (*fi'l al-muta'addī*). This grammatical construction indicates that the verb requires only one object (*maf'ūl bih*) to complete its meaning, and in the hadith, the object associated with *ru'yah* is exclusively *hilāl* (the lunar crescent). According to Bin Bāz, this linguistic structure clearly shows that *ru'yah* refers specifically to the physical act of sighting the lunar crescent. He contends that if *ru'yah* were meant to encompass both the act of sighting and the act of sighting with knowledge, the verb would logically require two objects to reflect both aspects—something that is not present in the hadith. Since *ru'yah* in this context is singularly

bounded with *hilāl*, it reinforces the interpretation that the hadith refers solely to the direct physical sighting of the lunar crescent, without incorporating the element of knowledge or calculation.

Ibn Uthaymīn (2009) disagrees with the broader interpretation of *ru'yah* that includes sighting with knowledge and calculation. He argues that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has already provided a specific definition of *ru'yah* as the act of physically sighting the lunar crescent. Ibn Uthaymīn further asserts that, according to a general rule in Islamic jurisprudence, when a term is vague or open to interpretation, the specific definition provided by the Prophet should be favoured. In the case of *ru'yah*, since the Prophet himself defined it as the act of lunar crescent sighting, Ibn Uthaymīn maintains that this definition must be adhered to. As a result, *ru'yah* cannot be reinterpreted to include other meanings, such as knowledge or astronomical calculation. This interpretation reinforces the traditional practice of determining the new Hijri month through the physical sighting of the lunar crescent, as it is grounded in the direct teachings of the Prophet.

On the other hand, Zulfiqar Ali Shah argues that the interpretation of the term *ru'yah* in the Qur'an and Hadith should be expanded beyond the sole definition of lunar crescent sighting. He contends that *ru'yah* can also be interpreted as an act of pondering and deep thinking (Shah, 2009). To support his argument, he references instances in Surah al-Baqarah, such as verse 243 and verse 246, where *ru'yah* is used in a broader context. In these verses, *ru'yah* is associated with understanding, reflection, and contemplation rather than just physical sight. This suggests that the term can encompass intellectual engagement and the use of knowledge, which may include pondering over signs or engaging in thoughtful analysis.

> Translation: Have you not considered those who left their homes in many thousands, fearing death? Allah said to them, "Die"; then He restored them to life. And Allah is full of bounty to the people, but most of the people do not show gratitude.
>
> (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:43)

> Translation: Have you not considered the assembly of the Children of Israel after [the time of] Moses when they said to a prophet of theirs, "Send to us a king, and we will fight in the way of Allah?" He said, "Would you perhaps refrain from fighting if fighting was prescribed for you?" They said, "And why should we not fight in the cause of Allah when we have been driven out from our homes and from our children?" But when fighting was prescribed for them, they turned away, except for a few of them. And Allah is Knowing of the wrongdoers.
>
> (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:46)

Both verses in Surah al-Baqarah use the term *ra'ā* to describe acts of pondering and reflection, making it clear that the term is not suitable to be interpreted solely as physical sighting. Zulfiqar Ali Shah further argues that when the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) used the verb *ru'yah*, it can imply not just the act of physical sighting but also the understanding or knowledge of time. In the context of determining the new Hijri month, this would mean knowing when the lunar crescent is likely to be visible. He then provides from prophetic saying reported by 'Abd Allāh bin Abī Awfā (RA).

> Translation: When you see the night approaching from that side (west) (and he pointed towards the east with his hand), then the observer of the fast should break it.
>
> (Al-Naisaburi, 2002)

Shah (2009) argues that in the aforementioned hadith, when the Prophet instructed to "observe (*ru'yah*)" the night, it was not a literal command to simply look at the night. Instead, the Prophet was instructing his companions to observe the night sky in order to determine the appropriate time to break their fast. Zulfiqar contends that if *ru'yah* were to be interpreted as a literal observation of the night, it would imply that all Muslims would need to physically observe the night sky every day during Ramaḍān to know when to break their fast. Such an interpretation would impose an undue burden on Muslims, making the practice of fasting in Ramaḍān more difficult.

Therefore, Shah suggests that *ru'yah* in this context should be understood as knowing the time of a particular event—whether it is the time to break the fast or the time to commence the new Hijri month. This understanding opens the door to using knowledge, including astronomical calculations, to determine the new Hijri month. He argues that *ru'yah* should be interpreted in a way that encompasses the use of informed knowledge to identify the timing of specific religious events, rather than limiting it to physical observation alone.

Maghraoui (2014), in agreement with Shah, argues that the term *ru'yah* should not be limited to the act of lunar crescent sighting alone. Maghraoui emphasises that *ru'yah* should be interpreted more broadly as an act of acquiring knowledge. This perspective suggests that *ru'yah* encompasses not just the physical sighting of the lunar crescent but also the understanding of its position, the timing of the commencement of the new Hijri month, and the use of astronomical calculations for its determination. Maghraoui's argument supports the idea that *ru'yah* must be understood in a more comprehensive sense, one that includes both the traditional practice of sighting the crescent and the modern application of scientific knowledge. By interpreting *ru'yah* as the process of knowing when the lunar crescent is visible and when the new Hijri month begins, including through the use of astronomical calculations, Maghraoui aligns with a broader and more flexible understanding of Islamic jurisprudence, accommodating both historical practices and contemporary advancements in astronomy.

While the interpretation of *ru'yah* may be limited to either sighting or sighting with knowledge, the term *shahida* offers a broader interpretation of lunar crescent sighting. According to Ibn Fāris, *shahida* encompasses the concepts of presence, acknowledgment, and announcement (Ibn Fāris al-Qazwini, 1969). Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ (1994) notes that the Muslim community has generally agreed that the phrase *shahida al-shahr* should be defined by the act of lunar crescent sighting, meaning that the new Hijri month is determined through this sighting. He further argues that using astronomical calculations to determine the new Hijri month is akin to practising sorcery, which is prohibited in Islam. He firmly maintains that the determination of the new Hijri month must rely solely on the physical sighting of the lunar crescent, as practised during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Similarly, Abū Bakr al-'Arabī (1988) contends that the term *shahida* should be understood as referring specifically to the sighting of the lunar crescent. He argues that the relevant verses of the Qur'an need to be interpreted (*tafsīr*) in light of the Prophet's practice, which was to determine the new Hijri month through the physical sighting of the crescent.

Al-Subkī (1992) explained this hadith from the perspective of Arabic grammar. According to him, the letter *lam* in the word *li ru'yatihi* is a *lam li ta'lil*, which means "because of" or "justification". This implies that the ruling of fasting must be based on the sighting of the crescent moon. The word *ru'yatihi* is a verbal noun (*maṣdar*) that is attributed (*muḍāf*) to both the object (*maf'ūl bih*) and the subject (*fā'il*), which are not explicitly stated in this phrase. Therefore, this phrase means that fasting is specifically mandated because of or due to the sighting of the crescent moon. However, according to al-Subkī, not everyone needs to sight the crescent moon. In this context, it is sufficient for certain individuals to sight the crescent, and it is not necessary for everyone to do so in order to begin fasting.

Ibn Abd al-Barr (1993) offers an interpretation of the term *shahida al-shahr* that aligns with the act of acquiring knowledge about the new Hijri month with certainty, specifically through the means of lunar crescent sighting. He acknowledges that some scholars, such as Ibn Sirīn, Muṭarrif, and Ibn Surayj, have been cited as allowing the use of astronomical calculations for determining the new Hijri month. However, Ibn Abd al-Barr argues that these scholars have been misquoted, pointing out that their actual positions, as recorded in their works, reject the use of astronomical calculations for this purpose. Ibn Abd al-Barr concludes his discussion with a strong condemnation of astronomical calculations, asserting that scholars from all major Islamic schools of thought, including al-Mālikī, al-Shāfi'ī, al-Awza'ī, and Abū Ḥanīfah, unanimously reject any means of determining the new Hijri month other than through the physical sighting of the lunar crescent. This firm stance underscores the traditional view that the sighting of the crescent moon remains the only acceptable method for establishing the beginning of the Hijri month, in accordance with the practices established by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and upheld by the majority of Islamic scholars throughout history.

Ibn Rusyd (2006), in his interpretation of the phrase *shahida al-shahr*, asserts that the term is ambiguous (*mujmal*) and requires clarification through the concepts of *ru'yah* (sighting) and *istikmāl* (rounding off the month to 30 days). He argues that it is essential to interpret this ambiguous term in light of the Prophet's teachings, which emphasise the physical sighting of the lunar crescent and rounding off the month when the crescent is not sighted. While Ibn Rusyd acknowledges that some scholars have permitted the use of astronomical calculations in determining the new Hijri month, he maintains that the majority of scholars agree that the new Hijri month should be determined through lunar crescent sighting. This position underscores the traditional interpretation and practice upheld by the majority of Islamic scholars, emphasising the importance of adhering to the established methods as guided by the sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Shah (2009) presents a different interpretation of the term *shahida* and disagrees with the notion that it should be confined to the meanings of *ru'yah* (sighting) and *istikmāl* (rounding off to 30 days). He argues that *shahida* is more appropriately interpreted in the following ways:

(a) The Act of Presence During the Month of Ramaḍān: This interpretation suggests that *shahida* refers to being present or participating in the month of Ramadan, which is not necessarily linked to physically sighting the lunar crescent.

(b) The Act of Acknowledgment That the Month of Ramaḍān Has Begun: Here, *shahida* is understood as acknowledging the commencement of Ramadan, which could be based on information received, rather than direct observation.

(c) The Act of Receiving News or Announcement That the Month of Ramaḍān Has Commenced: This interpretation implies that *shahida* includes accepting or receiving the announcement of the start of Ramadan, which could involve receiving news through various means, including astronomical calculations.

Shah argues that none of these interpretations inherently correlate with the physical sighting of the lunar crescent. Instead, they suggest an act of knowing or acknowledging the date of the Hijri month through other means, including the use of astronomical calculations. This broader interpretation allows for a more flexible understanding of how the commencement of the Hijri month can be determined, accommodating modern methods alongside traditional practices.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1993), in his exegesis, interprets the term *shahida al-shahr* as the act of being present during the determination of a new Hijri month. He draws an analogy to common Arabic expressions like *ash-hadu ṣalāta al-jumu'ah* (I witness *ṣalāh al-Jumu'ah*) or *ash-hadu al-ḥājj* (I witness al-Ḥājj), which do not refer to physically seeing the Friday Prayer or the pilgrimage but rather to being present or participating in them. Al-Rāzī argues that, similarly, the term *shahida* or "witness" in the context of determining the new Hijri month does not necessarily mean the act of physically sighting the lunar crescent. Instead, it can be understood as being present or involved in the process of determining the month, which could include receiving news, announcements, or even using astronomical calculations. This interpretation allows for a broader understanding of *shahida*, accommodating various means of determining the new Hijri month beyond just the traditional lunar crescent sighting. It supports the idea that the act of "witnessing" can involve different methods, including relying on reliable information or calculations, to establish the start of the month.

Al-Qarāfī (1998) argues that the term *shahida* should not be confined to the definitions of *ru'yah* (sighting) and *istikmāl* (rounding off to 30 days). He interprets *shahida* in three ways:

(a) Being Present During the Month of Ramaḍān: This suggests that *shahida* involves the act of participation or presence during the month, without necessarily implying physical sighting.

(b) Being Informed About the Commencement of the Month of Ramaḍān: Here, *shahida* is understood as receiving news or information about the start of Ramadan, indicating that knowledge of the new month can be conveyed through reliable means.

(c) Possessing the Knowledge to Know the Time of the New Hijri Month: This interpretation extends *shahida* to include having the necessary knowledge to determine the start of the new Hijri month, which could involve astronomical calculations.

Al-Qarāfī's interpretation indicates that *shahida al-shahr* is not limited to the physical act of lunar crescent sighting. Instead, it encompasses a more general approach to determining the new Hijri month, which includes the use of astronomical calculations. This broader understanding aligns with the view that *shahida* can involve various methods of acquiring knowledge about the new month, thus supporting the inclusion of modern techniques alongside traditional practices in Islamic jurisprudence.

According to ʻAbd al-Karīm Zaydān, the obligation to observe fasting is contingent upon the sighting of the crescent moon. This obligation is further reinforced by the necessity of physically sighting the crescent with the naked eye. However, it is not prohibited to use optical instruments, such as telescopes and cameras, to assist in the observation of the crescent moon. He also emphasises that Shariah principles impose certain boundaries, particularly when a definitive solution or method is already established (Hussayn, 2012).

Al-Mutiʻī (2005), on the other hand, states that the application of telescopes as an aid for the observer's eye is permissible from the perspective of Shariah. This use still upholds the principle of *ru'yah* (sighting) without disregarding the use of the naked eye. Moreover, telescopes have a high potential in assisting the naked eye by focusing solely on the crescent moon, rather than other objects. This practice is known as *'ayn al-hilāl*. Meanwhile, ʻAbd al-Hamid al-Syarwani offers a more explicit view, highlighting the advantages of using instruments during the sighting of the crescent moon. The use of these instruments is permitted because it still aligns with the application of *ru'yah*. When an observer sights the crescent moon using a telescope, this act is not disconnected from using the eye, as the telescope still relies on the observer's sight.

Additionally, several contemporary scholars, including Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, Alī al-Tantāwi, Muḥammad Ṣālih al-Uthaymīn, and Alī Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Qurrah Dāghī, have endorsed the use of telescopes as an aid to the naked eye during observations, in line with technological advancements. According to al-Qaraḍāwī, fatwas (Islamic legal rulings) may change due to the alteration of time, place, and context. He views modern technological tools as blessings from Allah SWT that assist in the fulfilment of obligatory acts of worship. These modern instruments remain a means to enhance the sighting of the crescent moon, particularly when certain factors hinder its visibility. Islamic law does not prohibit the use of modern conveniences to confirm the sighting of the crescent moon, provided that Muslims of the time are capable of utilising and benefiting from them. This view is also supported by Alī Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Qurrah Dāghī, who argues that Shariah-based sighting (*ru'yah*) can be conducted with modern equipment as a means to strengthen the capability of the eye (ʼAbdullaah, 2009; Al-Qaraḍāwī, 2006; Dāghī, 2016; Dirāniyyah, 1985).

However, ʻAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāzirī and Abū Muḥammad Maḥmūd bin Aḥmad al-ʻAynī present a different perspective. They argue that determining the sighting of the crescent moon, *ru'yah* does not require specific conditions. Instead, the determination of the beginning of the Hijri month is based on two factors: first, the direct sighting of the crescent moon if the sky is clear, and second, the method of *istikmal*, which involves completing 30 days in a month if the sighting of the crescent moon is obstructed. In essence, the issue of fasting depends on the outcome of the *ru'yah*, but they do not specify whether the *ru'yah* must be conducted with the naked eye alone or if optical instruments like telescopes are also permitted (al-Sharwanī n.d.).

Ibn Ḥajar, however, differs in opinion. He asserts that confirmation of the crescent moon cannot be carried out using the method of *ru'yah bi al-fiʻli*. He emphasises that this method is not accepted because the instruments used, such as lenses, are made of glass (like mirrors). Furthermore, he strengthens his argument by rejecting the use of instruments like telescopes, equating this rejection with the denial of the physical principle of light reflection through glass or water surfaces. He argues that this principle is doubtful when glass is used (Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, 2016).

Furthermore, al-Bujayrimī also did not accept the use of instruments for *ru'yah* (sighting). He, along with others, rejected the principles of physics regarding the reflection of light on surfaces like glass or water, arguing that these principles are questionable when using glass. The use of such instruments is not permitted as a precautionary measure, due to concerns that what is observed might not be the crescent moon but rather the image or reflection of another celestial body that resembles the crescent moon (al-Bujayrimī al-Azharī, 1971).

In conclusion, the interpretation of *ru'yah* and *shahida* plays a critical role in determining the accepted methodologies for establishing the new Hijri month within Islamic jurisprudence. Scholars who define *ru'yah* and *shahida* strictly as the physical act of lunar crescent sighting maintain that this is the sole method sanctioned by Islamic law for determining the start of a new Hijri month. This view is strongly upheld by a range of prominent scholars, including Bin Bāz, Ibn al-'Uthaymīn, Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Abū Bakr al-'Arabī, Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, and Ibn Rushd. These scholars emphasise the importance of adhering to the traditional practice of lunar crescent sighting, as established by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his companions. They argue that this method ensures certainty and aligns with the direct teachings and practices of the Prophet, making it the only valid and acceptable approach within Islamic jurisprudence.

These scholars assert that the act of physically sighting the crescent moon is integral to maintaining the authenticity and continuity of Islamic traditions. By relying on the direct observation of the lunar crescent, the community adheres to a practice that is deeply rooted in the history of Islam and provides a tangible connection to the way the Hijri calendar has been maintained since the time of the Prophet. For these scholars, the certainty provided by physical sighting is paramount, and they view the reliance on sighting as a necessary safeguard against uncertainty or error in the religious observance of key dates, such as the beginning of Ramḍān and Eid.

On the other hand, there is a growing perspective among some scholars that *ru'yah* and *shahida* should not be confined to the literal act of physically sighting the lunar crescent. These scholars, including Zulfiqar Ali Shah, Maghraoui, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and al-Qarāfī, advocate for a broader and more flexible interpretation of these terms. They argue that *ru'yah* and *shahida* can encompass not only physical sighting but also the use of informed knowledge and intellectual engagement, which includes the application of astronomical calculations. According to this view, the intention behind the sighting is not merely the physical act but also the understanding and acknowledgment of the lunar month's beginning, which can be accurately determined using modern scientific methods.

These scholars suggest that integrating astronomical calculations into the determination of the Hijri month is consistent with the broader objectives of Islamic law, which aim to facilitate ease and prevent hardship for the Muslim community. By allowing the use of reliable and precise astronomical data, these scholars argue that the determination of the Hijri month can be made with greater accuracy and consistency, particularly in situations where the physical sighting of the crescent may be impeded by environmental or geographical factors. This approach reflects an understanding of Islamic jurisprudence that is both rooted in tradition and responsive to contemporary scientific advancements, providing a practical solution for Muslims living in diverse and sometimes challenging environments.

Furthermore, the scholars who support the use of astronomical calculations highlight that this method can help to avoid the uncertainties and discrepancies that sometimes arise from relying solely on physical sighting, especially in regions with frequent cloud cover or other atmospheric conditions that obscure the moon. By adopting a broader interpretation of *ru'yah* and *shahida*, these scholars aim to uphold the integrity of the Islamic calendar while also embracing the tools and knowledge available in the modern era.

In summary, the ongoing debate between these two schools of thought underscores the dynamic nature of Islamic jurisprudence and its ability to engage with new challenges and opportunities. While traditionalists emphasise the importance of maintaining the practices established by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), those advocating for a broader interpretation of *ru'yah* and *shahida* seek to harmonise these practices with the realities of contemporary life. Both perspectives contribute to the richness and diversity of Islamic legal thought, offering Muslims a range of approaches to maintaining their religious obligations in a way that is both faithful to tradition and responsive to the needs of the present.

Table 1. Interpretations of *Ru'yah* and *Shahida* in Hijri Month Determination: Scholarly Perspectives and Methodological Approaches

Scholar	Interpretation of *Ru'yah*	Interpretation of *Shahida*	Methodology for Determining New Hijri Month
Bin Bāz (1995, p. 215)	Physical sighting of the lunar crescent	Not specifically discussed	Solely through the physical sighting of the lunar crescent
Ibn al-'Uthaymīn (2009, p. 312)	Physical sighting as defined by the Prophet (SAW)	Not specifically discussed	Adherence to traditional sighting practices, rejecting other methods
Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ (1994, pp. 232-248)	Physical sighting of the lunar crescent	Defined as the physical sighting of the crescent	Rejects astronomical calculations, endorses traditional sighting as the only method
Abū Bakr al-'Arabī (1988, p. 225)	Physical sighting	Defined as the physical sighting of the lunar crescent	Physical sighting as the sole method, supported by Prophetic practice
Ibn Abd al-Barr (1993, p. 334)	Physical sighting, with knowledge for certainty	Knowledge acquired through lunar crescent sighting	Strongly opposes astronomical calculations, emphasising traditional sighting
Zulfiqar Ali Shah (2009, p. 46)	Broader interpretation including pondering and understanding	Involves presence, acknowledgment, and receiving information	Supports both physical sighting and the use of astronomical calculations
Maghraoui (2007, p. 29)	Broad interpretation, including acquiring knowledge	Not specifically discussed	Advocates for integrating astronomical knowledge with traditional sighting practices
Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1993, p. 280)	Pondering, reflection, and broader intellectual engagement	Being present or involved in the process, not limited to sighting	Supports using reliable information, including astronomical calculations
Al-Qarāfī (1998 pp. 298-302)	Not limited to physical sighting; includes knowledge	Involves participation, receiving information, and knowledge	Endorses the use of astronomical calculations alongside traditional methods

Argumentation from the Implication of *Istikmāl* and *Faqdurū lah*

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) used the terms *istikmāl*, meaning "to complete", and *faqdurū lah*, meaning "to follow its natural course", when the lunar crescent is not observed on the 29th day of a Hijri month. The interpretation of these terms by scholars significantly influences their arguments regarding the methodology for determining the new Hijri month. If scholars interpret *istikmāl* and *faqdurū lah* as instructions to use astronomical calculations, then astronomical calculations become a viable method for determining the new Hijri month. This interpretation suggests that these terms allow for the application of scientific knowledge to predict the timing of the lunar crescent. Conversely, if scholars interpret *istikmāl* and *faqdurū lah* as directives to complete the month by counting 30 days in the event of a hindrance, such as cloud cover or other obstacles preventing the sighting of the lunar crescent, then the lunar crescent sighting remains the sole method for determining the new Hijri month. An example of how the Prophet used *istikmāl* and *faqdurū lah* is illustrated in the following hadith, narrated by Abū Hurayrah RA.

> Translation: The Prophet, or Abū al-Qāsim, said, "Start fasting on seeing the crescent (of *Ramaḍān*) and give up fasting on seeing the crescent (of *Shawwāl*), and if the sky is overcast (and you cannot see it), complete thirty days of *Sha'bān*".
>
> (Sahih Al-Bukhari, n.d., Hadith 1983)

Narrated by ‘Abd Allāh bin ‘Umar RA:

> Translation: Allah’s Messenger mentioned *Ramaḍān* and said, “Do not fast unless you see the crescent (of *Ramaḍān*), and do not give up fasting till you see the crescent (of *Shawwāl*), but if the sky is overcast (and you cannot see it), then act on estimation (i.e., count *Sha‘bān* as 30 days)”.
>
> (Sahih Al-Bukhari, n.d., Hadith 1983)

Ibn Manẓūr (n.d.) describes *istikmāl* as the act of completing something or bringing it to perfection, free from error or deficiency. He supports this definition by referencing the Quranic verse:

> Translation: “Today I have completed your religion for you, and I have perfected My favour upon you”.
>
> (Surah Al-Mā’idah, 5:3)

This suggests that *istikmāl* involves completing something to its fullest and most perfect state. Ibn Fāris al-Qazwinī (1969) traces the origins of the word *qadara* to meanings associated with amount, measure, and its final outcome. Al-Gharnāṭī simply defines *qadar* as the act of limiting or setting boundaries. Al-Muṭarrizī adds that *qadara* refers to valuing something in proportion to its equal—neither more nor less. Therefore, *faqdurū lah* can be understood as setting limits or determining something according to its inherent nature and measure. This interpretation of *faqdurū lah* implies that the act of determining should be done with precision, respecting the natural order or the intrinsic qualities of what is being measured. In the context of the Hijri month, it could suggest that the method of determining the month—whether through sighting or calculation—should be consistent with the natural phenomena and established principles governing timekeeping in Islam.

Al-Muṭarrif asserts that if the lunar crescent sighting is obscured, it is permissible to use astronomical tables to validate the visibility of the crescent. He interprets the term *faqdurū lah* as referring to the application of astronomical knowledge to determine the position of the lunar crescent in cases of hindrance, such as bad weather or cloudy conditions. However, Al-Muṭarrif emphasizes that if the crescent is not sighted on a clear night, the new Hijri month must be determined solely by the physical sighting of the lunar crescent. Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, however, cautions that the narration attributed to Al-Muṭarrif on this matter is not authenticated and, therefore, cannot be reliably attributed to him. This raises concerns about the validity of using Al-Muṭarrif's view as a basis for permitting astronomical calculations in the determination of the new Hijri month (Al-`Asqalani, 1993).

In another hadith text, it is stated, *fa-in ghubiya ʿalaykum fa-akmilū ʿiddata shaʿbāna thalāthīn* which means “complete the month of *Sha‘bān* to thirty days”. This narration is the most explicit, while in other narrations, there is an instruction to ‘count’, ‘count 30 days’, and ‘fast for 30 days. Furthermore, al-Nawawī (1929) opines that it is not obligatory to fast for *Ramaḍān* unless the crescent moon is sighted. Therefore, when the sky is covered with clouds, it is obligatory to complete *Sha‘bān* to thirty days, and only then should they begin fasting.

In addition, ‘Alī al-Ṣabūnī provides the view that the month of *Ramaḍān* is determined based on the method of *ru’yah* (sighting), either through the testimony of a trustworthy person or by completing the count of Sha‘bān to 30 days. He also rejects the method of astronomical calculations *hisab* based on the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), *ṣūmū li-ru’yatihi wa ifṭirū li-ru’yatihi* which means “Fast when you see the crescent and break your fast when you see it.” Ibn Surayj argues that the variation in the terms used—*faqdurū lah* and *istikmāl*—in the context of lunar crescent visibility obscuration suggests a flexibility in the methods available for determining the new Hijri month. According to him, this flexibility allows for either rounding off the month to 30 days or using astronomical calculations, depending on the circumstances. Ibn Surayj further asserts that individuals who possess the expertise to accurately calculate the position of the lunar crescent are permitted to use astronomical calculations to determine the new Hijri month. However, for those who lack such expertise, the determination should be limited to the traditional method of lunar crescent sighting. Similar to Al-Muṭarrif, Ibn Surayj stipulates that the use of astronomical calculations is only applicable when the lunar crescent sighting is obscured, such as during cloudy weather

or other hindrances. In clear conditions, the determination of the new Hijri month should be based solely on the physical sighting of the crescent (al-Ṣabūnī, 1972).

Ibn Qutaybah also interprets the term *faqdurū lah* as referring to the calculation of the lunar crescent's position in cases where its sighting is hindered. He argues that his interpretation aligns with the practice of Ibn ʻUmar, who began fasting on the day following the 29th of *Shaʻbān* when the lunar crescent was obscured. Ibn ʻUmar assumed that the crescent would have been visible on the 29th of *Shaʻbān* if not for the cloud cover, and thus, he proceeded with fasting based on the expectation that the crescent should have been sighted. This reasoning supports the view that when direct observation of the crescent is not possible due to hindrances like clouds, the position of the crescent can be calculated to make an informed decision. Ibn Qutaybah's interpretation suggests that the use of knowledge and calculation is valid in such circumstances, following the example set by Ibn ʻUmar (al-Qurtubi, 2002).

Ibn Ḥajar Al-`Asqalānī (1993) firmly argues that the phrase *faqdurū lah* can only be interpreted to mean *fa akmilū al-ʻiddah thalāthīn*, which means to complete the Hijri month to 30 days. He bases this interpretation on the premise that the term *faqdurū* should be understood in light of another version of the hadith, which uses the phrase *fa akmilū*. Ibn Ḥajar argues that when there are multiple variations of hadith regarding the method for determining the new Hijri month, the phrase *fa akmilū* provides a clear interpretation of *faqdurū lah*. According to him, the instruction is to complete the month to 30 days when the lunar crescent is not visible, rather than resorting to astronomical calculations or any other method. This interpretation emphasises the traditional approach of using the physical sighting of the lunar crescent as the primary means of determining the new Hijri month, with the fallback of completing the month to 30 days when sighting is hindered.

In interpreting the second hadith, al-Subkī focuses on the term *faqdurū lah* and presents three scholarly opinions. First, he emphasises the need to complete the full 30 days of Shaʻbān, which, according to him, is clearly stated in the first hadith found in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. Second, there is the opinion that this term refers to the use of astronomical calculations by experts in the field. Third, al-Subkī references an interpretation from the Ḥanbalī scholars, which means to narrow or restrict. This view aligns with the opinions of Matraf Ibn ʻAbd Allāh, Abū al-ʻAbbas Ibn Surayj, and Ibn Qutaybah, who interpret *ḍayyiqū lah* as relying on the calculation of the moon's phases. This interpretation suggests that if the crescent moon is not visible on the 29th of Shaʻbān due to unfavourable weather conditions, Muslims are permitted to begin fasting the next day. This is because scholars believe that the term *faqdurū lah* means *ḍayyiqū lah*, which requires calculating the position of the crescent moon on that day. However, al-Subkī firmly advocates for the first interpretation, which states that if the crescent moon is not visible on the 29th of Shaʻbān, the month should be completed by counting 30 days. He further notes a similarity between the first and second hadiths, both of which indicate that the primary reason for fasting is the sighting of the crescent moon. This suggests that the opinion which holds that sighting the crescent moon is not necessary, and that the mere existence of the crescent (known as *wujūd al-hilāl*) is sufficient to begin the new month, is not acceptable. According to al-Subkī, not only is *wujūd al-hilāl* insufficient, but it is also necessary to consider whether the crescent moon is visible (*imkān al-ru'yah*) to start the new month. Thus, al-Subkī's view clarifies that he accepts the concept of *imkān al-ru'yah* and rejects *wujūd al-hilāl*. In other words, if the crescent moon is above the horizon (*wujūd al-hilāl*) on the 29th of Shaʻbān but does not meet the conditions for visibility due to the lack of *imkān al-ru'yah*, then the next day should be counted as the 30th of Shaʻbān (Nawawi et al., 2020; al-Subkī, 1992).

Meanwhile, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī holds a different view, stating that the method of *istikmāl* mentioned in the hadith was not the primary objective emphasised. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) practised this method because it was an easily understood approach for the general public at that time and did not burden them. However, in the context of modern society, which is literate and numerate, a better method to achieve the goal of determining the start of the Hijri month is by using *ḥisāb*, or astronomical calculations. Al-Qaraḍāwī argues that the acceptance of *ḥisāb* in the context of determining the crescent moon should be considered from the perspective of prioritisation (*qiyās awlawī)*, where the *ḥisāb* method is definitive (*qaṭʻī)*, while the *ru'yah* method is speculative (*ẓannī*) (al-Qaraḍāwī, 1994).

Al-Dīn al-'Aynī (2001) asserts that the majority of classical jurists, including those from the Mālikī, Shāfi'ī, and Ḥanafī schools, as well as most scholars of hadith, concur that lunar crescent sighting is the sole method for determining the new Hijri month. He argues that lunar crescent sighting provides a higher level of certainty, which is essential for acts of worship in Islam. Al-'Aini emphasises that acts of worship must be based on certainty (*yaqīn*), and since lunar crescent sighting offers direct and observable evidence, it fulfils this requirement. In contrast, he contends that astronomical calculations are based on approximation and probability, which do not meet the standard of certainty required for religious practices. Therefore, he concludes that relying on lunar crescent sighting ensures that the determination of the new Hijri month is grounded in certainty, aligning with the principles upheld by the classical juristic tradition.

Ibn Taymiyyah contends that the use of calculations to determine the new moon is widely rejected among mainstream scholars of Shariah. He argues that both religious scholars and expert astronomers agree that using calculations to determine the crescent is not authentic. Ibn Taymiyyah suggests that only a misguided group, out of ignorance, has indulged in this practice, which he views as altering the religion of Allah and misleading people, drawing a parallel to the Jewish Rabbinical council's decision to adopt astronomical calculations for confirming Jewish lunar months. Further emphasising his opposition, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that the use of calculations is rejected by both the Sunnah and the consensus of the Companions. He considers reliance on such calculations as a deviation from both religious principles and logical correctness, labelling those who depend on them as misguided innovators. These statements underscore Ibn Taymiyyah's firm stance against using astronomical calculations to determine the new Hijri month (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1966).

Ibn Taymiyyah argued that it is impossible to determine the exact time the crescent moon appears through mathematical calculations. He acknowledged that astronomers could calculate the distance between the moon and the sun at sunset but emphasised that this does not guarantee the visibility of the crescent moon. Visibility, according to him, is a sensory matter influenced by factors such as atmospheric clarity, the celestial body's position, and the observer's eyesight. He criticised the attempt to determine crescent visibility through mathematics as misguided, noting that those who tried to do so deviated from both reason and revelation. Ibn Taymiyyah further pointed out that visibility varies from person to person, making mathematical predictions unreliable, a stance that led eminent scholars in the field to reject such views (Hallaq, 2001).

Sharaf al-Quḍāh argues that the texts permitting the use of calculations as a valid method for determining Islamic months do not differentiate between negation and confirmation. He asserts that these texts are generic in nature and applicable to both confirming and negating the months. In his view, the hadith allowing such usage supports confirmation rather than mere negation. Al-Quḍāh contends that the Islamic texts do not specifically distinguish between confirming or negating the months through calculations. He believes that it is scientifically valid to use astronomical calculations for both purposes, given their precision and accuracy. Therefore, he advocates for equally relying on calculations for both confirmation and negation of the months in contemporary times (Sharaf al-Quḍāh, 1999).

In conclusion, the scholarly interpretations of the terms *faqdurū lah* and *istikmāl* have led to significant differences in opinions regarding the methodology for determining the new Hijri month. Scholars who interpret *faqdurū lah* and *istikmāl* as referring to the use of astronomical calculations argue that these terms provide flexibility in the process, allowing for the application of scientific knowledge when direct observation of the lunar crescent is not possible. Scholars like Al-Muṭarrif, Ibn Surayj, and Ibn Qutaybah are among those who support this view. They contend that when the lunar crescent is obscured due to factors such as cloud cover or poor weather conditions, astronomical calculations can serve as a valid and reliable alternative to physical sighting. These scholars believe that the inclusion of calculations helps ensure the accuracy and consistency of the Islamic calendar, particularly in regions where weather conditions often hinder crescent sighting.

Shaikh M. Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī, Shaikh 'Alī al-Ṭanṭāwī, Aḥmad M. Shākir, Muṣṭafā al-Zarqā', Sharaf al-Quḍāh, and other scholars argue that modern science has advanced to such a degree of accuracy in astronomical calculations that the necessity of moon sighting with the naked eye is no longer relevant. They contend that the requirement for physical sighting in Shariah was essential in an era when the Muslim community lacked education and expertise in astronomy and related sciences. However, now that

we have achieved a high level of certainty through these scientific advancements, they advocate for relying on calculations to determine Islamic months, eliminating the need for actual moon sighting.

Al-Muṭarrif, for instance, suggests that astronomical tables can be used to validate the visibility of the lunar crescent when it cannot be observed directly. He argues that the term *faqdurū lah* refers to the use of astronomical knowledge to determine the crescent's position in cases of hindrance. Similarly, Ibn Surayj interprets the variation in terms used in the hadiths—*faqdurū lah* and *istikmāl*—as indicating flexibility in determining the new Hijri month. He permits the use of astronomical calculations for those who possess the expertise, especially when physical sighting is not possible. Ibn Qutaybah also supports this view, linking his interpretation to the practice of Ibn ʻUmar, who relied on the expected position of the crescent when it was obscured.

On the other hand, a significant group of scholars, including Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī, Al-Dīn al-ʻAynī, and others from the classical Islamic legal schools—such as the Mālikī, Shāfiʻī, and Ḥanafī schools—argue that the terms *faqdurū lah* and *istikmāl* should be understood as instructions to complete the Hijri month to 30 days when the crescent is not visible. These scholars assert that lunar crescent sighting, as practised during the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) time, provides a level of certainty that is essential for acts of worship. They maintain that since the hadiths and Islamic tradition emphasise physical sighting, this method should remain the sole approach to determining the new Hijri month.

Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī, for instance, argues that the phrase *faqdurū lah* can only be interpreted to mean *fa ʻakmilū al-ʻiddah thalāthīn*—completing the month to 30 days—based on the consistency and clarity provided by other versions of the hadith. He contends that the traditional practice of sighting, with the fallback of completing the month to 30 days, aligns with the principles of certainty required in Islamic jurisprudence.

Al-Dīn al-ʻAynī further reinforces this view by stating that the majority of classical jurists from various schools concur that lunar crescent sighting is the most certain method, and acts of worship must be based on certainty, not approximation. He argues that astronomical calculations, which are based on estimates and probabilities, do not meet the standard of certainty required for religious practices.

In summary, the debate on the interpretation of *faqdurū lah* and *istikmāl* reveals a clear divide between scholars who advocate for the inclusion of astronomical calculations in the determination of the new Hijri month and those who insist on adhering strictly to the traditional method of lunar crescent sighting. This ongoing discourse highlights the dynamic nature of Islamic jurisprudence, as scholars seek to balance adherence to traditional practices with the practical realities and advancements of the modern world. The diversity of opinions underscores the richness of Islamic scholarship and the commitment to ensuring that religious practices remain both authentic and relevant across different contexts and times.

Table 2. Interpretations of *Istikmāl* and *Faqdurū lah* in Hijri Month Determination: Scholarly Perspectives and Methodological Approaches

Scholar	Interpretation of *Istikmāl* and *Faqdurū lah*	Methodology for Determining New Hijri Month	Additional Notes
Al-Muṭarrif (1993, p. 150)	*Faqdurū lah* refers to using astronomical tables to validate crescent visibility when sighting is obscured	Permits the use of astronomical calculations when the lunar crescent sighting is obscured	Emphasises traditional physical sighting in clear weather conditions
Ibn Surayj (1993, p. 151)	The variation in terms allows flexibility in determining the Hijri month	Allows astronomical calculations for those with expertise; otherwise, lunar crescent sighting	Advocates for physical sighting when weather conditions are clear
Ibn Qutaybah (1993, p. 152)	*Faqdurū lah* refers to calculating the crescent's position when sighting is hindered	Supports the use of knowledge and calculation when direct observation is not possible	Links interpretation to Ibn ʻUmar's practice of beginning fasting based on expectation

Table 2. Interpretations of *Istikmāl* and *Faqdurū lah* in Hijri Month Determination: Scholarly Perspectives and Methodological Approaches *(Continued…)*

Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (1993, p. 152)	*Faqdurū lah* should be understood as completing the month to 30 days	Lunar crescent sighting is primary; fallback is completing the month when sighting is hindered	Emphasises traditional practice aligned with certainty
Al-Subkī (1992, p. 227)	Interprets *faqdurū lah* with three views: completing 30 days, using astronomical calculations, or narrowing	Prefers completing 30 days if the crescent is not visible; accepts *imkān al-rukyah* (visibility possibility)	Rejects *wujūd al-hilāl* (mere existence of the crescent) as insufficient
Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (1994, p. 28)	*Istikmāl* was an accessible method for the Prophet’s time; modern society should use *hisab*	Advocates for using astronomical calculations as they are more certain	Argues from the perspective of prioritisation *(qiyās awlawi)*
Al-Dīn al-‘Aynī (1996, p. 16)	The majority of classical jurists uphold lunar crescent sighting as the sole method	Emphasises the importance of certainty in acts of worship, siding with traditional methods	Critiques astronomical calculations as lacking the necessary certainty

Argumentation from the Implication of *Ummī*

The term *ummī* is a key factor in the method for determining the new Hijri month. Scholars who interpret *ummī* as an indication of how the new Hijri month is determined conclude that lunar crescent sighting is the sole method for this determination. Conversely, scholars who interpret *ummī* as a rationale argue that this reasoning does not apply to Muslims today; therefore, they assert that astronomical calculations are permissible method for determining the new Hijri month. The hadith concerning *ummī* that implies the method for determining the new Hijri month is as follows:

Narrated by ‘Abd Allāh bin ‘Umar RA.

> Translation: The Prophet said: “We are an illiterate nation; we neither write, nor know accounts. The month is like this and this”, i.e., sometimes 29 days and sometimes 30 days.
>
> (Sahih Al-Bukhari, n.d., Hadith 1983)

Al-Nawawī (1929), in his explanation of this hadith, argues that the term *ummī* signifies the Prophet’s intention not to impose undue hardship on his followers. During the time of the Prophet, astronomical calculations were considered a complex and difficult tasks, making them unsuitable for determining the new Hijri month. The argument of avoiding hardship has been upheld by the majority of classical jurists, who maintain that lunar crescent sighting should remain the sole method for Hijri month determination. This perspective emphasises the practicality and accessibility of the practice, aligning with the Prophet’s intent to keep religious obligations manageable for all Muslims.

Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (1993) provides a statement that aligns with the views of al-Nawawī. Ibn Ḥajar argues that the term *ummī* accurately reflects the condition of the Muslim community during the Prophet’s time, which was largely unlettered and illiterate. Only a small number of the Prophet’s companions were capable of writing and performing calculations. Given this limited capacity, requiring the Muslim community to rely on astronomical calculations to determine the new Hijri month would have imposed undue hardship and an unnecessary burden. As a result, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) established the practice of determining the new Hijri month through the sighting of the lunar crescent, a method accessible to all. Ibn Ḥajar further concludes that this ruling should continue to be followed even in later times, when Muslims became more capable of performing astronomical calculations with ease. He emphasizes that the Prophet's instruction was to “complete it to 30 days” (*akmilū*) if the crescent was not sighted, rather than instructing the community to “ask the mathematician” (*as'al al-muḥāsib*). This, according to Ibn Ḥajar, underscores the enduring relevance of lunar crescent sighting as the method prescribed by the Prophet for determining the start of the new Hijri month.

Al-Munāwī (1972), in his discussion of the term *ummī*, asserts that the use of astrologers' predictions for determining the lunar crescent is not rooted in Sharī'ah. He argues that such predictions are inherently uncertain and therefore not suitable for religious observances, which must be performed with certainty. According to al-Munāwī, the act of lunar crescent sighting provides the necessary conviction and clarity for establishing the new Hijri month, avoiding the complexities and uncertainties associated with astronomical calculations. Al-Munāwī further emphasises that lunar crescent sighting eliminates the potential hardships that could arise from relying on complex astronomical calculations, making the process accessible to all Muslims. He notes that even as astronomical calculations have become easier and more widespread among Muslims, the practice of lunar crescent sighting for determining the new Hijri month continues to be upheld. This enduring practice, he suggests, is due to its ability to ensure certainty and simplicity in fulfilling religious obligations, in line with the principles of Islamic jurisprudence.

In interpreting the third hadith, al-Subkī (1992) explains that the hadith clearly indicates that the number of days in a month can be either 29 or 30 days. Al-Subkī further emphasises that this hadith does not specifically reject or discredit the opinions of astronomers who state that the duration of a month is determined by the period between one conjunction (*ijtimak*) and the next. According to astronomers, there are times when the crescent moon may be visible, and there are times when it may not be visible. Therefore, it is clear to al-Subkī that this hadith does not prohibit or criticise the practice of calculating or writing. On the contrary, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) actually encouraged the practices of calculation and writing.

Al-Albānī (1983), in his discussion of the term *ummī*, argues that it serves as an indication that the new Hijri month should be determined through lunar crescent sighting, irrespective of whether the Muslim community is illiterate or not. He contends that the term *ummī* reflects the universal nature of Islam, applicable to all times and places. Al-Albānī further asserts that the use of the term *ummī* by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is a directive for Muslims to adhere to the original practices of Islam as they were during the Prophet's time. This includes the method of determining the new Hijri month through lunar crescent sighting, which, according to Al-Albānī, should be maintained as a timeless and unchanging practice within Islamic jurisprudence. By emphasising the continuity of this practice, Al-Albānī underscores the importance of preserving the traditional methods of religious observance, ensuring that the determination of the Hijri month remains consistent with the practices established by the Prophet and his companions.

Bakr Abū Zayd (2001) argues that the Prophet's use of the term *ummī* was intended to emphasise that the new Hijri month should be determined without any reliance on calculations. According to Abū Zayd, the determination of the new Hijri month is meant to be based solely on the sighting of the lunar crescent. He contends that the term *ummī* is not merely a reflection of the educational limitations of the Muslim community during the Prophet's time but rather serves as a timeless directive on how the new Hijri month should be established. This interpretation suggests that the method of determining the Hijri month through lunar crescent sighting is meant to be followed regardless of the time period, geographical location, or the educational advancements of the Muslim community. In this view, *ummī* represents a guiding principle for the observance of this religious practice, ensuring that it remains consistent and aligned with the original teachings and practices of Islam, as established by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Abū Zayd further argues that the Prophet's use of *ummī* demonstrates that the new Hijri month is to be determined without the use of any calculations. The reliance on lunar crescent sighting alone, as outlined by the term *ummī*, indicates that this practice is not merely a response to the specific conditions of the early Muslim community but is instead a universal and enduring directive. This principle, he contends, is applicable regardless of the era, location, or educational status of the Muslim community, reinforcing the importance of adhering to the traditional method of lunar crescent sighting as the sole means of determining the new Hijri month.

Al-Dhahabī (1958), in his discussion of the term *ummī*, emphasises that although there was a use of calculation in other areas such as *farā'id* (inheritance laws) during the Prophet's time, the Prophet explicitly opposed the use of astronomical calculations for determining the new Hijri month. Al-Dhahabī argues that this stance was taken to prevent the reintroduction of intercalary practices, which were prevalent among the pre-Islamic Arabs. These practices involved manipulating the calendar to adjust the

months according to seasonal needs, leading to inconsistency and uncertainty in timekeeping. To safeguard against such practices, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) established the method of determining the new Hijri month through the physical sighting of the lunar crescent on the 29th day of the Hijri month. By relying on this straightforward and observable method, the Prophet ensured that the Islamic calendar remained free from the errors and manipulations associated with intercalation. Al-Dhahabī's analysis underscores the importance of adhering to the lunar crescent sighting as the sole method for determining the new Hijri month, in accordance with the clear directives given by the Prophet, and as a means of preserving the integrity and consistency of the Islamic calendar.

Shah (2009) offers a different perspective on the Prophet's phrase, "We are unlettered people, we neither write nor read". He argues that this phrase was not meant to indicate a general incapacity for writing, reading, or calculating among the Prophet's companions but rather to distinguish the Muslim method of determining the Hijri calendar from the intercalary practices of the Jews and pre-Islamic Arabs. Zulfiqar Ali Shah points out that, contrary to the notion of widespread illiteracy, the companions of the Prophet were indeed capable of writing, reading, and performing calculations, as evidenced by their poetry, financial records, and the application of *farā'id* (inheritance laws). He explains that the pre-Islamic Arabs and Jews used intercalation to manipulate and synchronise their lunar calendars with the solar year, often for political or financial gain. This practice, which involved adding extra months to the calendar, was explicitly prohibited by Allah and was considered a form of disbelief. The Prophet's statement, according to Zulfiqar Ali Shah, was therefore a way to distinguish the Muslim practice of calendar determination from these corrupt practices. Zulfiqar Ali Shah concludes that the Prophet's emphasis on Muslims being "unlettered" was not a literal commentary on their abilities but a metaphorical stance to distance Islamic calendar practices from the intercalation methods of others. This interpretation, Zulfiqar Ali Shah argues, justifies the use of astronomical calculations for determining the new Hijri month. He contends that astronomical calculation, unlike intercalation, is a scientifically accurate method based purely on the position and visibility of the lunar crescent, free from the manipulations that plagued other calendar systems. Therefore, he advocates for the acceptance of astronomical calculations as a valid method for determining the new Hijri month, in line with the principles of accuracy and integrity that the Prophet sought to uphold.

Muṣṭafā Aḥmad al-Zarqā' (1990, 1986) supports the adoption of astronomical calculations for determining the new Hijri month, offering a nuanced interpretation of the term *ummī* in the context of the Prophet's statement, "We are an unlettered people; we neither write nor read". Al-Zarqā' contends that the term *ummī* does not imply that lunar crescent sighting should be the sole method for determining the new Hijri month. Rather, he argues that the Prophet's instruction to rely on lunar crescent sighting was a practical response to the status of the Muslim community at that time, where the majority of the companions were unlettered and lacked the ability to write, read, or perform complex calculations. Al-Zarqā' emphasises that during the Prophetic era, the majority of Muslims were indeed *ummī*, which justified the emphasis on lunar crescent sighting as a simple and accessible method for everyone. However, he points out that the situation has significantly changed in the modern era. Today, the majority of Muslims are no longer illiterate; they have access to systematic education and possess the ability to engage in sophisticated intellectual pursuits. This is evident in the production of extensive scholarly works and the development of advanced mathematical software, such as MoonC 6.0 and Accurate Time, which are capable of precise astronomical calculations. Given this transformation in the educational and intellectual status of the Muslim community, Al-Zarqā' argues that the original reason for relying solely on lunar crescent sighting—namely, the *ummī* status of the early Muslims—no longer applies. As a result, he concludes that the term *ummī* should not restrict modern Muslims from utilising astronomical calculations to determine the new Hijri month. In his view, as the educational status of the Muslim community has evolved, so too should the methods used for determining important religious dates, allowing for the integration of modern scientific advancements in the process.

Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (2005) and Shaykh Aḥmad Shākir (1992) both share the same opinion on the implication of the word *ummī* in the determination of the new Hijri month. Both scholars see *ummī* as a sign that the Prophet did not wants to burden his companions with the task of documenting and calculating the new Hijri month, as most of them were illiterate. The determination of the new Hijri month using lunar crescent sighting is a method that would not burden the companions of the Prophet since it does not require calculation and documentation. The situation for Muslims today, however, does not see task of

calculation and documentation for the new Hijri month as a burden. In fact, it is much easier to organise the Hijri calendar annually for administrative planning. Thus, due to the current situation of Muslims, al-Qaraḍāwī and Aḥmad Shākir concede that *ummī* does not apply anymore, and the new Hijri month can be determined by astronomical calculation (Moosa, 1998).

Table 3. Interpretations of *Ummī* in Hijri Month Determination: Scholarly Perspectives and Methodological Approaches

Scholar/Source	Interpretation of *Ummī*	Methodology for Determining New Hijri Month
Al-Nawawī (1929, p. 273)	Ummī indicates the Prophet's intent to avoid hardship for his followers	Lunar crescent sighting is the sole method
Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (1993, p. 157)	Ummī reflects the condition of the largely unlettered Muslim community during the Prophet's time	Lunar crescent sighting remains the method, even as Muslims became literate
Al-Munāwī (1972, p. 715)	Ummī implies that predictions by astrologers are not valid for Sharī'ah	Lunar crescent sighting is the only method, ensuring certainty and simplicity
Al-Albānī (1983, p. 312)	Ummī is a directive for all times, reflecting Islam's universal nature	Lunar crescent sighting should be maintained as a timeless practice
Bakr Abū Zayd (2001, p. 81)	Ummī indicates the Hijri month should be determined without reliance on calculations	Lunar crescent sighting is the sole method, applicable across all eras
Zulfiqar Ali Shah (2009, p. 121)	Ummī was a metaphorical stance to distance Islamic practices from intercalation	Advocates for astronomical calculations as a valid and accurate method
Muṣṭafā Aḥmad al-Zarqā' (1986, p. 914)	Ummī reflected the practical response to the status of the unlettered community	Argues that modern Muslims should use astronomical calculations
Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (2005, p. 165)	Ummī was meant to avoid burdening the companions	In the modern era, advocates for the use of astronomical calculations
Shaykh Aḥmad Shākir (1992, p. 8)	Ummī was meant to avoid burdening the companions	Supports the use of astronomical calculations in the modern context

In conclusion, scholars who interpret the term *ummī* as a descriptor of how the new Hijri month should be determined reject the use of astronomical calculations for this purpose, insisting that lunar crescent sighting is the sole valid method. This viewpoint is supported by scholars such as al-Dhahabī, Bakr Abū Zayd, al-Albānī, al-Munāwī, Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, and al-Nawawī. Conversely, scholars who argue that the term *ummī* refers to the condition and limitations of the companions during the Prophetic era advocate for the acceptance of astronomical calculations in determining the new Hijri month. They contend that the *ummī* condition no longer exists in the modern age, making the use of calculations both appropriate and necessary. This perspective is championed by scholars like Zulfiqar Ali Shah, Muṣṭafā Aḥmad al-Zarqā', Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, and Shaykh Aḥmad Shākir.

Conclusion

The methodology for determining the new Hijri month is centred around two primary perspectives: those who advocate for lunar crescent sighting as the sole method and those who accept astronomical calculations. Both perspectives are well-supported by evidence from the Qur'an, prophetic traditions, the practices of the companions, and scholarly opinions. Given the strong foundations of each viewpoint, it is challenging to dismiss either argument or propose a new perspective without neglecting significant aspects of the existing discourse. From the *al-Sunnah* (Prophetic tradition) perspective, determining the new Hijri month through lunar crescent sighting directly mirrors the practices of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his companions. This method is seen as carrying a unique authenticity and continuity with the early Islamic community. While astronomical calculations provide scientific precision and predictability, they were not practised by the Prophet or his companions, leading many scholars to prioritise the traditional sighting method.

Policymakers must consider the implications of choosing between lunar crescent sighting and astronomical calculations for national and regional consistency in observing Islamic months, especially Ramadan and Eid. Adopting astronomical calculations can offer predictability, aiding in the planning of public holidays and religious events. However, maintaining the traditional sighting method upholds a practice with deep religious significance, which may resonate strongly with the public's desire for authenticity in religious observance. Religious authorities face the challenge of balancing tradition with modernity. Upholding lunar crescent sighting emphasises a tangible, communal act of worship that connects Muslims across generations. On the other hand, embracing astronomical calculations can address practical challenges, such as unfavourable weather conditions that hinder visibility or the need for a more unified global observance. Religious authorities must carefully weigh these factors to provide guidance that aligns with both theological principles and contemporary realities.

For researchers, this debate offers a rich area of study that bridges theology, astronomy, and social sciences. Future research could explore the historical development of these methodologies, their reception among various Muslim communities, and their implications for modern Islamic practice. Additionally, there is potential for technological innovation in tools that facilitate lunar crescent sighting or improve the accuracy of astronomical calculations. Researchers might also examine the psychological and spiritual impact of each method on the Muslim community, providing insights that could inform both policy and practice. Globally, the choice of methodology for determining the new Hijri month can influence international relations among Muslim-majority countries. A unified approach could strengthen ties and enhance cooperation, especially during significant Islamic events. On the other hand, differing methods might reflect the diversity of Islamic practice, which can also be a source of richness within the global Muslim community.

In conclusion, while both lunar crescent sighting and astronomical calculations have strong arguments supporting their use in determining the new Hijri month, the traditional method of sighting is deeply rooted in the prophetic tradition, providing a direct link to the practices of the early Islamic community. However, the adoption of astronomical calculations may offer practical benefits in the contemporary context, making this an ongoing and dynamic area of discussion within Islamic jurisprudence.

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