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## Basis for Using the *Rukyah* Method for Determining the Arrival of *Ramadan* and *Syawal* in Brunei Darussalam

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### Abstract

There are various methods used to determine the arrival of *Ramadan* (fasting) and *Syawal* in South East Asia. Malaysia and Indonesia use the *ruk yah* (sighting of the moon) and *hisab* (mathematical calculations), Singapore uses the *hisab* while Brunei only uses the *ruk yah* method. These differences are due to the different basis for using a certain method to determine the arrival of *Ramadan* and *Syawal*. The basis here refers to religious references and forms of *istidlal* (inferences). The question is, what religious references are used to substantiate the adoption of the *ruk yah* method in Brunei? What is their form of *istidlal* based on the religious references? To answer all these questions this study has two objectives. Firstly, it intends to determine the religious references that act as the basis for using the *ruk yah* method in Brunei. Secondly, to analyse the different forms of *istidlal* based on the religious references. In order to achieve these objectives, this qualitative study used library research and expert interview methods for collecting data. All the data were analysed using the content analysis method. Lastly, this study concluded that religious references from the al-Qur'an and Hadith used as a basis for applying the *ruk yah* method in Brunei is similar to the religious references used as a basis for applying *ruk yah* and *hisab* in other South East Asian countries. The only difference is the various forms of *istidlal*.

**Keywords:** method, determining, rukyah, hilal, Ramadan, Syawal

### 1. Introduction

In South East Asia, especially in Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore or better known as MABIMS<sup>3</sup>, there are different methods used to determine the starting of the holy months of *Ramadan* (fasting) and *Syawal* (Hari Raya). For example, Malaysia and Indonesia use the *ruk yah* and *hisab* methods; Singapore uses the *hisab* method while Brunei only uses the *ruk yah* method. The main reason for using different methods in determining the start of *Ramadan* and *Syawal* is due to the different basis for using a particular method, either *ruk yah* only or *hisab* only or both *ruk yah* and *hisab* among the MABIMS countries. The basis refers to the religious references and forms of *istidlal* (inferences). The use of different religious references and forms of *istidlal* leads to the use of different methods when determining the start of *Ramadan* and *Syawal*. The use of different methods would still exist if the consensus is only on the use of religious references but the forms of *istidlal* would still differ. The question is which of the religious references are referred to when using the *ruk yah* method in Brunei.

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<sup>3</sup> MABIMS is an acronym standing for Ministers of Religion for Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapura. This refers to the yearly unofficial meetings of the Ministers of Religion or ministers responsible for managing religious problems in the four countries. The form of consensus touches upon safeguarding the problems and interests of the people without interfering in political matters of member countries. MABIMS was first held in 1989 in Brunei Darussalam.

What forms of *istidlal* are they using based on the religious references? Based on this issue, this study intends to achieve two objectives. Firstly, it intends to identify the religious references that are relied upon when using the *rukyah* method for determining the start of *Ramadan* and *Syawal* in Brunei. Secondly, to analyze the forms of *istidlal* based on the religious references relied upon by it.

In order to achieve both these objectives, this qualitative study involves both, primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained through interviews with two respondents, firstly from Awang Haji Hassan Haji Metali, Acting Chief Registrar, and Syariah Appeals Court, Brunei who was interviewed on 27 January 2015. The second respondent was Awang Haji Julaihi Haji Lamat, Acting Senior Surveyor, Head of the Geodetic Section, Survey Department, Ministry of Development Brunei, who was interviewed on 28 January 2015. Both these respondents were selected using the purposive sampling method. After the respondents were identified, they were interviewed using the semi-structured expert interview method in order to obtain data related to the use of the *rukyah* method in Brunei. Meanwhile, the secondary data were obtained through library research. All the data were analysed using the content analysis method.

The results of the analysis had three intended uses in this study. Firstly, to seek and assess the basis for using the *rukyah* method in Brunei using secondary materials that are in written or oral form, which would be difficult to achieve through normal observation. Secondly, to analyse the religious references that are the basis for using the *rukyah* method in Brunei. Thirdly, to assist the researcher to summarise the different forms of *istidlal* based on the religious references. Generally, the discussion in this study is divided into five main sections. The first section discusses the meaning of the *rukyah* method, while the second discusses the religious references that are the basis for using the *rukyah* method. The third section discusses the *rukyah hilal* method based on the views of the *fuqaha*<sup>4</sup>; the fourth discusses the religious references that are the basis for using the *rukyah* method in Brunei and the various forms of *istidlal*; and the fifth is the conclusion.

## 2. Definition of the *Rukyah* Method

There are innumerable writers who have discussed the meaning of *rukyah* (*ru'yah al-hilal*) in their writings, especially writings that discuss *fiqh*. For example, al-Khin, al-Bugha and al-Syarbajiy (1996:335) and al-Zuhayliy (2010:481-482) stated that the *rukyah* method is a process for sighting *hilal* (young crescent moon)<sup>4</sup> on the 30<sup>th</sup> night of *Sya'ban* and *Ramadan* (after the sun sets on the 29<sup>th</sup> of *Sya'ban* and *Ramadan*) by one or two impartial Muslim witnesses. The witnesses then report their findings to the *qadi* (judge). The meaning of *rukyah* adduced by al-Khin, al-Bugha and al-Syarbajiy (1996) and al-Zuhayliy (2010) explains three issues. The first issue relates to the crescent moon (*hilal*) that is sighted (*rukyah*) after the sun sets on the 29<sup>th</sup> of *Sya'ban* in order to determine the start of *Ramadan* and on the 29<sup>th</sup> of *Ramadan* to determine the beginning of *Syawal*. The second issue states that one or two impartial Muslims must witness the *hilal*, while the third issue is the reporting of the findings to the authorities. To further specify the time for sighting the *hilal*, Baharrudin Zainal (2003:123) and the Pulau Pinang Mufti's Department (t.t) mentioned that the process of sighting *hilal* was performed after the *ijtimak*<sup>5</sup> was first sighted as soon as the sun sets on the 29<sup>th</sup> of *Sya'ban* and *Ramadan*. As for the number of witnesses, the Meeting of the Coordination Committee of the 4<sup>th</sup> Islamic Rukyah and Taqvim of MABIMS from 1 to 5 July 1992 in Jakarta, Indonesia had decided that the number of witnesses for *rukyah hilal Ramadan* was only one; whereas for *hilal Syawal*, two witnesses are needed (Directorate for Forming Islamic Judicial Bodies, 2001).

The definition of *rukyah* adduced by al-Khin, al-Bugha and al-Syarbajiy (1996) and al-Zuhayliy (2010) previously did not mention whether the *rukyah hilal* was performed with the naked eye or by using an apparatus.

<sup>4</sup> *Hilal* or the crescent moon is defined as the crescent moon after *ijtimak* is seen for the first time as soon as the sun sets.

<sup>5</sup> *Ijtimak* (*conjunction*) means that the moon and sun are at a meeting point or the ecliptic longitude. During the *ijtimak* the bright side of the moon faces the sun while the dark side faces the earth. There are two methods of *ijtimak*. The first method refers to *ijtimak* that occurs on the 29<sup>th</sup> of Hijri. If *ijtimak* occurs before sunset, then the moment the sun sets is considered the beginning of a new Hijri. Conversely, if *ijtimak* occurs after the sunsets then the next day is rounded up to 30 days. The second *ijtimak* method consists of *al-hilal*, which refers to the *ijtimak* that occurs on the 29<sup>th</sup> of Hijri before sunset. The new moon begins when *hilal* is at *ufuk* for a short period after sunset without considering whether *hilal* is visible or not (Pulau Pinang Mufti's Department, 2014)

In relation to this, Abdullah Ibrahim (2007:38) and the Pulau Pinang Mufti's Department (t.t) mentioned that *rukayah hilal* can be performed by the naked eye or by using optical equipment such as binoculars, telescopes and theodolites operated by a skilled and trained individual at the official location for sighting the moon.

### 3. The Basis For Using the *Rukyah* Method

Those who practice the *rukayah hilal* base their practice on the religious references from the al-Qur'an and Hadith. There is only one verse from the al-Qur'an that has become the religious reference for using the *rukayah* method. This verse is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Religious References from the Al-Qur'an Related to the *Rukyah* Method**

Num.	Surah	Surah Num.	Verse Num.	Meaning of the Verse
1.	Al-Baqarah	2	185	Allah SWT exhorted "The month of Ramadan [is that] in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for the people and clear proof 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"

According to verse 185 of Surah al-Baqarah, as shown in Table 1, al-Tabariy (1992:152-153), Ibn Kathir (1992:222-223), and al-Zamakhshariy (1995:226-227) stated that it is compulsory to start fasting based on *rukayah hilal*. Thus, the word *syahida* (to witness or see) in the verse brings forth the method of *rukayah hilal*.

Besides the religious references from the al-Qur'an, there are also Hadith that have become religious references for using the *rukayah* method. Some of these Hadith are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Religious References from the Hadith Related to the *Rukyah* Method**

Num.	Narrators	Num. Hadith	Scripture	Chapter	Meaning of the Hadith
1.	Al-Bukhariy	1907	Al-Sawm	11	Narrated by Abdullah bin Dinar r.a that the Prophet SAW exhorted "The month (can be) 29 nights (i.e. days), and do not fast till you see the moon, and if the sky is overcast, then complete Sya'ban as thirty days"
2.	Al-Bukhariy	1909	Al-Sawm	11	It was told to us by Muhammad bin Ziyad: I heard Abu Hurairah r.a. saying that the Prophet SAW exhorted "Start fasting on seeing the crescent (of Ramadan), and give up fasting on seeing the crescent (of Shawwal), and if the sky is overcast (and you cannot see it), complete thirty days of Sya'ban"
3.	Muslim	1081	Al-Siyam	2	Narrated by Abu Hurairah r.a. that the Prophet SAW exhorted "Observe fast when you see it (the new moon) and break fast when you see it (the new moon of Shawwal), but when (the actual position of the month is) concealed from you (on account of cloudy sky), then count thirty days"
4.	Al-Bukhariy	1906	Al-Sawm	11	Narrated by Abdullah bin Umar r.a. that the Prophet SAW exhorted "Do not fast unless you see the crescent (of Ramadan), and do not give up fasting till you see the crescent (of Shawwal), but if the sky is overcast (if you cannot see it), then act on estimation (i.e. count Sya'ban as 30 days or fa 'uqduru)"

Note: The numbering system in this Hadith is based on the Hadith numbering system arranged by Ibn Hajar (1989:150) and al-Nawawiy (1996:158-159)

All the four Hadith in Table 2 had determined the start of the holy months of *Ramadan* and *Syawal* by performing the *rukya h ilal*. This is based on the words *tarawh* (you see it) (Narrated by al-Bukhariy, Hadith Number: 1907), *li ru'yatih* (because you saw it) (Narrated by al-Bukhariy, Hadith Number: 1909), *ra'aytum* (you saw it), *ra'aytumuh* (you saw it) (Narrated by al-Muslim, Hadith Number: 1080), and *taraw* (you saw) (Narrated by al-Bukhariy, Hadith Number: 1906) found in the Hadith. If the *h ilal* is not sighted because it is blocked by clouds (*fa 'in ghamma 'alaykum*), then it is compulsory to round-up the number of days for the preceding months (for *Sya'ban* before *Ramadan* and *Ramadan* before *Syawal*) to 30 days. This is based on expressions such as *fa akmilu al-'iddah thalathin* (then you must round-up the number of days in the month to 30 days) (Narrated by al-Bukhariy, Hadith Number: 1907), *fa akmilu 'iddah Sya'ban thalathin* (then you must round-up the number of days for *Sya'ban* to 30 days) (Narrated by al-Bukhariy, Hadith Number: 1909), *fa sumu thalathin yawman* (fulfil your fasting to 30 days) (Narrated by Muslim, Hadith Number: 1081), and the expression *fa 'uqduru lah* (then you must calibrate it) (Narrated by al-Bukhariy, Hadith Number: 1906). This matter was further substantiated by the views of al-Syafi'iy (2001:232) who stated that determining the start of *Ramadan* and *Syawal* must be by way of *rukya h ilal* or rounding-up the number of days for the months preceding it (*Sya'ban* and *Ramadan*) to 30 days. Syatta (1938:215) also stated that it is compulsory to fast during *Ramadan* by rounding-up the month of *Sya'ban* to 30 days or performing the *rukya h ilal* by an impartial Muslim witness..

When examining the discussions in most of the *fiqh* scriptures belonging to the al-Syafi'iy sect, it was found that all of them shared the view that determining the start of *Ramadan* and *Syawal* is only through *rukya h ilal*. If the *h ilal* is not sighted due to cloudy weather (*fa 'in ghamma 'alaykum*), then the number of days for the preceding months (which is the month of *Sya'ban* before *Ramadan* and the month of *Ramadan* before *Syawal*) must be rounded-up to 30 days.

Hence, it is clear here that none of the *fiqh* scholars from the al-Syafi'iy sect had mentioned that the start of *Ramadan* and *Syawal* be determined based on calibrations by scholars of *hisab* or *falaq*. For those who only use the *rukyah* method in determining the start of *Ramadan* and *Syawal*, they emphasised that calculations by scholars of *hisab* and *falaq* for determining the start of *Ramadan* and *Syawal* was one practice never carried out by the Prophet SAW. The practice of the Prophet SAW, His companions and *salaf* scholars was that they would gather at a particular place on the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup> day to perform the *rukyah hilal*. And if the *hilal* were sighted, then they would fast or celebrate Eidul Eid the following day; and if nothing was sighted then they would calculate the month of *Sya'ban* and *Ramadan* by rounding it up to 30 days.

According to S. Farid Ruskanda (1994:24), the group that steadfastly adheres to the *rukyah* method for determining the start of *Ramadan* and *Syawal* reject the *hisab* method because they believe in a Prophet's SAW Hadith, which states that Muslims during that time (the time of the Prophet SAW) were Muslims who were *ummi* and not capable of carrying out the *hisab*. This differs with the group that adheres to the *rukyah* and *hisab* methods (complimenting each other) such as Rasyid Rida, Mustafa al-Zarqa', Yusuf al-Qaradawiy and Muhammad Syakir because they believe that contemporary Muslims are not *ummi* anymore as they are well taught in astronomy. Hence, they are capable of calculating and forecasting not only normal phenomena such the sighting of the moon but also more complicated issues such as the eclipse. According to the group that uses the *rukyah* and *hisab* method (mutually complimenting each other), it emphasised that the *hisab* method is compulsory when determining all the lunar (*qamariah*) months in any condition except in places where there are no individuals skilled in the field of astronomy.

In the *fiqhiyyah* method, the decision is based on whether there is *illah* (reason). If there is *illah* (reason), whereby the people are *ummi* and there is no one capable of performing the *hisab* then only the *rukyah* is sufficient. Hence, when there is no *illah* (reason), as when there is someone to perform the *hisab*, then the *rukyah* must be complimented by the *hisab*. The two methods must be combined based on the criteria of *imkan al-ru'yah* (visibility of the moon).<sup>7</sup>

#### 4. The *Rukyah* Method For *Hilal* Ramadan and Syawal

There are numerous *rukyah* methods for *hilal* Ramadan and Syawal, which defer according to the *fiqh* sects. When discussing the views of the *fiqh* sects in relation to the *rukyah* method for *hilal* Ramadan and Syawal, al-Zuhayliy (1989:598-604) and al-Jaziriy (1990:498-500) had divided their discussions into four groups, which are elaborated on below.

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<sup>6</sup> Narrated by Ibn 'Umar r.a. that the Prophet SAW exhorted: "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 thirty days" (Narrated by al-Bukhariy, Hadith no. 1913, Ibn Hajar, 1989:159).

<sup>7</sup> According to the Pulau Pinang Mufti's Department (t.t), this method refers to the use of *rukyah* and *hisab* to determine the position and condition of *hilal* on the 29 day of Hijri when the sun sets and the fulfillment of sighting the moon. The conditions for sighting the moon in Malaysia (1991) are as follows:

- a) The altitude of *hilal* must be at 2°; and
- b) The length of the arch (elongation) from the sun to the moon must be 3°; or
- c) The 'age' of *hilal* from *ijtimak* until the moon sets should be 8 hours.

**Table 3: Views of the Fiqh Sects on the Rukyah Method for *Hilal Ramadan* and *Syawal***

Num.	Sect	Discussion
1	Al-Hanafiyyah	The beginning of Ramadan is determined by the rukyah hilal method or by ensuring that Sya'ban consists of 30 days. Actually, the rukyah hilal Ramadan and Syawal process is influenced by the weather, if it is clear or cloudy. Following is the rukyah method for hilal Ramadan dan Syawal according to the weather: For rukyah hilal Ramadan during cloudy weather, it is sufficient for the rukyah to be performed by one impartial Muslim (without considering his impiousness); For rukyah hilal Syawal during cloudy weather there must be two impartial Muslim witnesses For rukyah hilal Ramadan and Syawal during good weather, the condition requires the rukyah to be performed by several Muslim witnesses. The witnesses should possess good morals and be convincing (zann or al-zann al-ghalib).
2	Al-Malikiyyah	The Hilal is only decided by rukyah, which involves two impartial Muslims, irrespective of whether the rukyah is for hilal Ramadan or Syawal. If the rukyah hilal is not conclusive on the 29th day then the month must be rounded-up to 30 days.
3	Al-Syafi'iyyah	The rukyah Hilal must be by a witness who is a Muslim, of sound mind, of age, independent, of male gender and impartial. After the rukyah hilal the witness must report to a qadi that he has/has not sighted the hilal. This is irrespective of whether the hilal is hilal Ramadan or Syawal. If the hilal is not sighted on the 29th day then the days in the month are rounded-up to 30 days. However, some do differentiate between the rukyah hilal Ramadan and rukyah hilal Syawal. For the rukyah hilal Ramadan, it would be sufficient to have one witness, whereas for the rukyah hilal Syawal there should be two witnesses.
4	Al-Hanabilah	Hilal Ramadan and Syawal could be decided through rukyah with a witness who is impartial, of male gender, independent, of age and has not committed any big sins. If during the rukyah the weather is clear and the hilal is not visible, the number of days for Sya'ban is rounded-up to 30 days. However, if the weather is cloudy and the hilal is not visible, then fasting or Eidul Eid occurs the next day. It rests upon the decision of the authority (if the weather is cloudy) and the public are required to adhere to the decision on either to fast or to celebrate Eidul Eid. According to another narration by Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal r.a: If the weather is cloudy then it is not compulsory to fast the next day and if one insists on fasting then it is not considered as fasting during Ramadan.

According to Table 3, although the *fuqaha'* from the various sects do differ in opinion on the *rukyah hilal* method for determining *Ramadan* and *Syawal*; hence, they are at a consensus that only the *rukyah* method be used when determining *hilal Ramadan* and *Syawal*. However, only the manner in which the *rukyah* is performed differs. In reference to this, the researcher is of the opinion that the *fuqaha'* from the various sects still use the *hisab* method but its use is strictly a calculation guide only. In other words, if the *hilal Ramadan* and *Syawal* were not sighted using the *rukyah* method, the *hisab* method would still not be used to lay claim to indicate the early holy months although the position of the moon has fulfilled the criteria of *imkan al-rukyah*. Actually, this is the method used in Brunei. Hence, Brunei is more inclined to steadfastly follow the al-Syafi'i'y sect (Interview with Awang Haji Hassan Haji Metali on 27 January 2015).

## 5. Data Analysis and Findings

Brunei's standing and basis in determining the sighting of the moon for the holy months of *Ramadan* and *Syawal* are by using the *rukyyah* method. The *rukyyah hilal* (sighting of the crescent) is carried out after sunset on the 29<sup>th</sup> day. If sighting of *hilal* fails then the fasting month is rounded up to 30 days. In matters like this, the *hisab* method is only used as a calculation guide and is not used to determine the sighting of the moon although the position of the moon satisfies the criteria of *imkan al-rukyyah* (Interview with Awang Haji Hassan Haji Metali on 27 January 2015).

### 5.1 Religious References Applied in the Rukyyah Method in Brunei

According to Awang Haji Hassan Haji Metali (interview on 27 January 2015) and Awang Haji Julaihi Haji Lamat (interview on 28 January 2015), among the religious references relied upon when using the *rukyyah* in Brunei are as follows:

**Table 4: List of Religious References Related to the Use of the Rukyyah Method in Negara Brunei Darussalam**

Num.	Source	Religious References Related to the Rukyyah Method	Profile	Keyword
1	Al-Qur'an	Allah SWT exhorted "The month of Ramadhan [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"	Al-Baqarah, 2:185	syahida (to witness)
2	Hadith	Narrated by Abdullah bin Dinar r.a that the Prophet SAW exhorted: "Start fasting on seeing the crescent (of Ramadan), and give up fasting on seeing the crescent (of Shawwal), and if the sky is overcast (and you cannot see it), complete thirty days of Sha'ban"	Narrated by al-Bukhariy, Hadith. no. 1909, Ibn Hajar, 1989:150	tarawh (you see it)
3	Hadith	Narrated by Abu Hurairah r.a. that the Prophet SAW exhorted: "Observe fast when you see it (the new moon) and break fast when you see it (the new moon of Shawwal), but when (the actual position of the month is) concealed from you (on account of cloudy sky), then count thirty days"	Narrated by Muslim, Hadith no. 1081, al-Nawawiy, 1996:158-159	ra'aytum (you see) dan ra'aytumuh (you see it)
4	Hadith	Narrated by Abdullah bin Umar r.a. that the Prophet SAW exhorted: "Do not fast unless you see the crescent (of Ramadan), and do not give up fasting till you see the crescent (of Shawwal), but if the sky is overcast (if you cannot see it), then act on estimation (i.e. count Sya'ban as 30 days or fa 'uqduru)"	Narrated al-Bukhariy, Hadith no. 1906, Ibn Hajar, 1989:150	taraw (you see)

According to Awang Haji Hassan Haji Metali (interview on 27 January 2015), based on the religious references found in the Hadith and indicated in Table 4 above, YDP Dato Seri Maharaja Dato Seri Utama Haji Awang Ismail bin Omar Abd, the Mufti of Brunei delivered a *fatwa* as follows:

“There are too many Hadith related to the beginning of fasting and the end of the fasting period (*Eidul Eid*). These Hadith explain, among others, the compulsory nature of fasting and the end of the fasting period by sighting of the moon (as commanded by Allah SWT) and not due to the mere knowledge of the moon’s physical existence or by *hisab* or *falak*. It is prohibited to assume the sighting of the moon, to fast before the moon has been sighted, to recklessly assume it’s the fasting month when the *hilal* has not been sighted or the 30 day period has not been fulfilled, and to assume that fasting can be broken before sighting the *hilal Syawal* or if the 30 day period for *Ramadan* has not been fulfilled. And this has been the correct *qawl* (view) until al-Imam Ibn Hajar r.a. stated: “Since these Hadith are true and authentic and many of the narrators agree that fasting and end of fasting should be based on sighting of the moon or rounding up the number of days in a month to 30 days, hence, there is no need to follow al-Imam Ahmad” (Interview with Awang Haji Hassan Haji Metali on 27 January 2015)

In relation to this fatwa and Chapter 29 of the Syariah Courts Act, Brunei has proclaimed as follows:

“It is the responsibility of the Syar’ie Chief Justice to initiate investigations at or nearly the beginning or end of each month to ascertain the date for the subsequent month using the *rukayah* and determine on which day the moon could be sighted and then to certify the findings of the *rukayah* with his signature” (Interview with Awang Haji Hassan Haji Metali on 27 January 2015)

According to Awang Haji Hassan Haji Metali (interview on 27 January 2015), the *rukayah* method practiced in Brunei uses the naked eye. In relation to sighting the *hilal* with the naked eye without using optical equipment such as binoculars or telescopes, Awang Haji Julaihi Haji Lamat (interview on 28 January 2015) suggested that this matter be referred to the Mufti of Brunei. Actually, during the 9th Coordinating Committee Meeting on Rukyah and the Islamic Calender on 19-20 May 1998 in Singapore, the Brunei Delegation<sup>8</sup> had reported that Brunei at that moment (i.e in 1998) had employed the *rukayah* method by using telescopes during every month of *Hijriyyah*. However, the endeavour proved unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, *rukayah* was performed on every 29th and 30th Hijriyyah in order to test its accuracy and deliberations. Moreover, the delegation from Brunei decided to obtain digital telescopes such as the ones used in Malaysia in an effort to enhance its efforts on *rukayah* by using telescopes (Directorate for Forming Islamic Judicial Bodies 2001:58)

## 5.2 The Different Forms of *Istidlal* (Inferences)

Based on verse 185 of Surah al-Baqarah, which was mentioned earlier in Table 4, the word *syahida* was stated, which carried the meaning of sighting (*rukayah*) the *hilal*. Hence, mandatory fasting is based on the sighting of *hilal*. It is clear that based on the word *syahida*, Brunei had used the *rukayah* method to determine the start of the holy months (interview with Awang Haji Hassan Haji Metali on 27 January 2015).

Besides the verses of the al-Qur’an, the *rukayah* method also relies on Hadith to establish the start of *Ramadan* and *Syawal* by *rukayah hilal*. This is based on the word *tarawh* (Narrated by al-Bukhariy, Hadith Number: 1907), *ra’aytum ra’aytumuh* (Narrated by al-Muslim, Hadith Number 1080), and *taraw* (Narrated by al-Bukhariy, Hadith no. 1906). However, if *hilal* is not sighted because of bad weather (*fa ’inn ghamma ’alaykum*), then it is compulsory to round-off the months preceding it to 30 days (interview with Awang Haji Hassan Haji Metali on 27 January 2015). This is based on the expression *fa akmilu al-’iddah thalathin* (hence one must round-off the month to 30 days) (Narrated by al-Bukhariy, Hadith no. 1907), *fa sumu thalathin yawman* (hence fulfil your fasting to 30 days) (Narrated by Muslim, Hadith no. 1081) and the expression *fa ’uqduru lah* (hence you must calculate) (Narrated by al-Bukhariy, Hadith no. 1906).

<sup>8</sup> The Delegation from Brunei Darussalam that attended the 9th Coordinating Committee Meeting on *Rukyah* and the Islamic Calender on 19-20 May 1998 in Singapore comprised three representatives, namely Pengiran Dato’ Haji Jaberuddin Haji Mohd Salleh (Head of the Delegation), Assistant Director for Hajj Affairs, Department of Hajj Affairs, Ministry of Islamic Affairs Brunei Darussalam; Awang Haji Lazim bin Haji Metali, Acting Deputy Chief Kadhi of Brunei Darussalam; and Awang Haji Mahadi bin Haji Md. Tahir, Land Surveyor, Survey Department, Brunei Darussalam.

Although there are some quarters who have stated that there exist the *hisab* and *rukayah* methods based on the word *fa 'uqduhu lah* (to calculate) found in the Hadith narrated by Abdullah bin Umar r.a earlier; hence, it has been refuted by Ibn Hajar (1989:152) based on this argument: "Look at the moon and make your deliberations (on the month of *Sya'ban*) until it fulfills 30 days. Actually, what influences us to define the word *fa 'uqduhu lah* this way are the other Hadith that ask us to round-up the month of *Syaban* to 30 days. In the scripture Sahih al-Bukhariy, there are Hadith that clearly state "Complete your deliberations or calculations of *Sya'ban* to 30 days."

Hence, that is definition of *fa 'uqduhu lah* being held by practitioners of the *rukayah* method in Brunei, which is in accordance with other Hadith stated earlier. Parties that define *fa 'uqduhu lah* with the meaning 'to calculate' according to the ways of the scholars of calculation (*hisab*) or *falaq* are not doing so according to the al-Qur'an or Hadith. Hence, these are the religious references that show that the Prophet SAW and His companions determined *Ramadan* and *Syawal* by using the *rukayah hilal* method.

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the earlier discussions, it could be concluded that the religious references from the al-Qur'an and Hadith that have become the basis for using the *rukayah* method in Brunei are similar to the religious references that have become the basis for using the *rukayah* method in other MABIMS countries. The only difference lies in the various forms of *istidlal*. The practitioners of the *rukayah* method in Brunei only belief in the *rukayah* method permitted by *syarak* when determining the arrival of *Ramadan* and *Syawal*. Their belief is based on three main reasons. The first is the word *syahida*, which is found in verse 185 of Surah al-Baqarah and refers to the *rukayah* method. Secondly, the word *tarawh*, *ra'aytum* and *ra'aytumuh* found in Hadith 1907 narrated by al-Bukhariy and Hadith 1801 narrated by Muslim and thirdly, the word *fa' uqduhu lah* found in Hadith 1906 narrated by al-Bukhariy refer to the command to ensure that the month of *Sya'ban* consists of 30 days. This is supported by several other Hadith that collectively command Muslims to round up the number days in a holy month to 30 days if the *hilal* is not sighted due to bad weather.

However, this differs with the practitioners of *rukayah* and *hisab*. They define *syahida*, which is found in verse 185 of Surah al-Baqarah, as being aware of the existence of the moon using either the *rukayah* method or *hisab*. This is because sighting the moon was not the actual meaning found in verse 185 of Surah al-Baqarah but rather sighting the moon is a way of knowing its existence. The word *fa' uqduhu lah* found in Hadith al-Bukhariy Number: 1906 is defined as following the moon's orbit or in other words using *hisab*.

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