



Initial Formulation of the Isha Prayer Time in the Book *Al-Fiqh 'Ala Madzahib Al-Arba'ah*

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Abstract: This study discusses the formulation of the beginning time of Isha prayer according to the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, namely Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali, as explained in the book *Al-Fiqh 'ala al-Madzahib al-Arba'ah* by Abdurrahman al-Jaziri. The main issue in this study lies in the different interpretations of the meaning of syafaq as the sign of the end of Maghrib prayer time and the beginning of Isha prayer time. This research uses a qualitative method with a library research approach, employing descriptive-comparative analysis techniques to compare the opinions of scholars and relate them to astronomical phenomena. The results show that the Hanafi school argues that the beginning of Isha time starts after the disappearance of syafaq abyadh (white twilight), while the Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools argue that it begins after the disappearance of syafaq ahmar (red twilight). These differences are influenced by the interpretation of hadith, geographical conditions, astronomical observations, and the legal reasoning methods of each school. In the Indonesian context, the opinion of the majority scholars is more widely applied because it is more suitable for the geographical conditions of the equatorial region and serves as the basis for determining prayer schedules by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This study shows that differences of opinion regarding the beginning of Isha prayer time are not contradictions, but rather a form of the richness of ijtihad in Islamic jurisprudence.

Keywords: *Isha Prayer, Syafaq, Four Schools of Thought, Fiqh, Islamic Astronomy*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini membahas formulasi awal waktu salat Isya menurut empat mazhab fikih, yaitu Hanafi, Maliki, Syafi'i, dan Hanbali, sebagaimana dijelaskan dalam kitab *Al-Fiqh 'ala al-Madzahib al-Arba'ah* karya Abdurrahman al-Jaziri. Permasalahan utama dalam penelitian ini terletak pada perbedaan penafsiran terhadap makna syafaq sebagai penanda berakhirnya waktu Maghrib dan masuknya waktu Isya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kepustakaan (library research), dengan teknik analisis deskriptif-komparatif untuk membandingkan pendapat para ulama serta mengaitkannya dengan fenomena astronomi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mazhab Hanafi berpendapat awal waktu Isya dimulai setelah hilangnya syafaq abyadh (cahaya putih), sedangkan mazhab Maliki, Syafi'i, dan Hanbali berpendapat bahwa awal waktu Isya dimulai setelah hilangnya syafaq ahmar (cahaya merah). Perbedaan ini dipengaruhi oleh penafsiran hadis, kondisi geografis, pengamatan astronomis, serta metode istinbath hukum masing-masing mazhab. Dalam konteks Indonesia, pendapat jumbuh lebih banyak digunakan karena sesuai dengan kondisi geografis wilayah khatulistiwa dan menjadi dasar penetapan jadwal salat oleh Kementerian Agama. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa perbedaan pendapat mengenai awal waktu Isya bukanlah pertentangan, melainkan bentuk keluasan ijtihad dalam fikih Islam.

Kata Kunci: *Salat Isya, Syafaq, Empat Mazhab, Fikih, Astronomi Islam*

A. Introduction

Prayer is the primary obligation in Islamic teachings, and its performance has been prescribed based on specific times as explained in the Qur'an and Hadith. Punctuality in performing prayer is an essential condition for the validity of worship, making the determination of the beginning and end of prayer times a very fundamental issue in fiqh studies. The five obligatory prayer times Dhuhr, Asr, Maghrib, Isha, and Fajr each have prescribed time limits based on Islamic



legal guidance.¹ Therefore, understanding the evidences related to prayer times is very important so that the practice of worship is carried out in accordance with religious provisions.

One of the prayer times that often gives rise to differences of opinion among Islamic scholars is the beginning of the Isha prayer time.² This difference centers on the interpretation of the term *shafaq*, which is used as a marker for the end of Maghrib time and the beginning of Isha time. Some scholars understand *shafaq* as the red twilight that appears after sunset, while others interpret it as the white light that appears after the disappearance of the red twilight. This difference in interpretation directly affects the determination of the beginning of Isha time, resulting in variations in practice among Muslim communities.

The majority of scholars (*jumhur ulama*), consisting of the Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools, hold the opinion that the beginning of Isha time starts after the disappearance of *shafaq ahmar* (the red twilight) on the western horizon. Meanwhile, the Hanafi school maintains that the beginning of Isha time starts after the disappearance of *shafaq abyadh* (the white twilight) that appears after the red twilight has vanished.³ This difference arises not only from the interpretation of hadith, but is also influenced by geographical conditions, astronomical observations, and the methods of legal reasoning (*istinbath al-ahkam*) used by each school's imam

An explanation of the differences in the views of the four schools of Islamic law regarding the beginning of the Isha prayer time can be found in the book *Al-Fiqh 'Alaa Madzahib Al-Arba'ah* by Abdurrahman Al-Juzairi. In this book, it is explained that each school has a different interpretation of the meaning of *shafaq* as the sign for the beginning of Isha time. These differences were further explained by Labibah in her research as follows:⁴

"فَالشَّفَقُ عِنْدَ أَبِي حَنِيفَةَ هُوَ الْبَيَاضُ، وَغَيْبَتُهُ ظُهُورُ السَّوَادِ بَعْدَهُ، فَمَتَى ظَهَرَ السَّوَادُ حَرَجَ وَقْتُ الْمَغْرِبِ، الْحَتَابِلَةُ قَالُوا: إِنَّ لِلْعِشَاءِ وَقْتَيْنِ كَالْعَصْرِ: وَقْتُ اخْتِيَارِيٍّ، وَهُوَ مِنْ مَغِيبِ الشَّفَقِ إِلَى مُضِيِّ ثُلُثِ اللَّيْلِ الْأَوَّلِ، الْمَالِكِيَّةُ قَالُوا: إِنَّ وَقْتُ الْعِشَاءِ الْإِخْتِيَارِيُّ يَبْتَدِئُ مِنْ مَغِيبِ الشَّفَقِ الْأَحْمَرِ"

"(1) Abu Hanifah was of the opinion that *shafaq* refers to the white twilight, and its disappearance is marked by the emergence of darkness afterward. When darkness appears, then the time of Maghrib has ended. (2) The Hanbali school holds that the time of Isha is divided into two: *ikhhtiyari* (preferred time), which begins from the disappearance of *shafaq* until the first third of the night has passed. (3) In the Maliki school, the preferred (*ikhhtiyari*) time of Isha begins when the red twilight (*shafaq ahmar*) disappears."

¹ Didin Hidayat et al., "The Concept of Law and the Beginning of Prayer Times Based on Hadith and the Opinion of Scholars," *Jimu: Multidisciplinary Scientific Journal* 3, No. 04 (2025): 2270–79.

² Ahmad Nizam, "Differences of Opinion in Determining the Direction and Time of Worship (Comparison of Sharia Methodology and Science)," *Muqaranah* 5, No. 1 (2021): 1–18.

³ Labibah Amil Farah, "Prayer Time for Asr, Maghrib and Isha' Hadith Perspective," *Ephesians* 4, No. 1 (2020).

⁴ Sofwan Jannah, *Determining the Timing of Maghrib, Isha, and Fajr Prayers from a Fiqh and Astronomical Perspective*, February 19, 2020.



Differences in the views of *fuqaha* regarding the beginning of Isha time often raise questions within the community, especially in determining prayer schedules used by religious institutions and official agencies.⁵ However, these differences should not be seen as contradictions, but rather as the result of scholars' *ijtihad* in understanding the textual sources of Islamic law according to the context of their time. In fact, this diversity reflects the breadth and flexibility of Islamic jurisprudence in responding to different realities across various regions.

The study of the beginning of Isha prayer time remains important because it is still relevant to the worship practices of Muslims today, especially in the preparation of accurate prayer schedules that can be accepted by the wider community. In addition, understanding the differences of opinion among the schools of Islamic law can foster an attitude of tolerance in responding to the diversity of religious practices. This research is also important to avoid the assumption that such differences are mistakes, whereas in reality they are the result of *ijtihad* supported by strong scholarly foundations.

Based on this explanation, this article aims to analyze the initial formulation of Isha prayer time according to the four major schools of Islamic law as explained in the book *Al-Fiqh 'Alaa Madzahib Al-Arba'ah* by Abdurrahman Al-Juzairi, as well as to identify the factors underlying these differences of opinion and their relevance in the contemporary practice of determining prayer times. Thus, this study is expected to provide an academic contribution in the field of fiqh of worship while also serving as a practical reference for the community in understanding the determination of Isha prayer time more comprehensively.

B. Research methods

This article uses a qualitative research method with a library research approach. This method was chosen because the object of study focuses on the thoughts of Islamic scholars and the analysis of Islamic literature related to determining the beginning of Isha prayer time.⁶ The library research approach allows the writer to examine various classical and contemporary sources in depth in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the differences of opinion among the *fuqaha*.

The primary source of this research is the book *Al-Fiqh 'Alaa al-Madhahib al-Arba'ah* by Abdurrahman Al-Juzairi, which systematically explains the views of the four major schools of Islamic law in Islam, namely the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools, including the discussion on determining the beginning of Isha prayer time. In addition, this study is also supported by secondary sources such as books of tafsir, hadith, classical fiqh books, scientific journals, and academic articles relevant to the research theme.

The data analysis technique used is descriptive-comparative, namely by describing the opinions of each school, comparing their similarities and differences, and relating them to astronomical phenomena, particularly the meaning of *shafaq* as the indicator for the beginning

⁵ Nizam, "Differences of Opinion in Determining the Direction and Time of Worship (Comparison of Sharia Methodology and Science)."

⁶ Mahanum Mahanum, "A Review of the Literature," *Alacrity : Journal Of Education*, July 9, 2021, 1–12.



of Isha time. Through this approach, the writer is able to understand more deeply the factors influencing these differences of opinion, such as hadith interpretation, geographical conditions, methods of sky observation, and the social customs during the time of each school's imam. Thus, this research not only explains the differences of opinion textually, but also examines their relevance in the contemporary practice of determining prayer times.

C. Discussion

1. *Al-Fiqh 'Alaa Madzahib al-Arba'ah*

The book *Al-Fiqh 'Alaa Madzahib al-Arba'ah* (Islamic Jurisprudence According to the Four Schools of Thought) is one of the most important works in the study of comparative Islamic jurisprudence, written by Shaykh Abdurrahman bin Muhammad 'Iwadh Al-Juzairi. He was born in Shandawil, Egypt, in 1299 H, or around 1882 CE. Since childhood, Al-Juzairi studied Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and various other Islamic sciences. His formal education was completed at Al-Azhar University between 1896 and 1909, which became the strong foundation of his expertise in fiqh and *usul al-fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence).⁷

Al-Juzairi's academic and scholarly career developed rapidly after completing his studies. In 1912, he was appointed as an inspector in the Mosque Department of the Egyptian Ministry of Endowments (Waqf), and later promoted to chief inspector of the ministry. In addition, he also served as a professor in the field of *Usuluddin* and became a member of the *Hai'ah Kibar al-'Ulama* (Council of Senior Scholars). In 1359 H/1941 CE, Al-Juzairi was appointed as a professor at the Higher School of *Usuluddin* of Al-Azhar, and before his death in Helwan in 1941 CE, he became a member of Al-Azhar's Senior Scholars Committee.⁸

Abdurrahman Al-Juzairi was known as a highly productive scholar in writing academic works. Some of his important works include *Al-Fiqh 'Alaa Madzahib al-Arba'ah*, which discusses the jurisprudence of the four major Sunni schools; *Tawdih al-'Aqa'id* on theology; *Al-Akhlaq al-Diniyyah wa al-Hikam al-Syar'iyyah* concerning religious ethics; *Adillat al-Yaqin* as a response to certain Christian views; and *Diwan Khutab*, a collection of sermons. Among these works, *Al-Fiqh 'Alaa Madzahib al-Arba'ah* remains one of his most famous and widely referenced books in comparative fiqh studies.

This book contains legal rulings of Islamic jurisprudence arranged systematically like classical fiqh books in general, beginning with chapters on purification (*thaharah*), prayer (*salah*), fasting (*sawm*), almsgiving (*zakat*), pilgrimage (*hajj*), and extending to issues of transactions (*muamalah*) and family law. The uniqueness of this book lies in its presentation of the opinions of the four major schools of thought Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali within one concise yet comprehensive discussion. This makes it easier for readers to observe the similarities and differences among scholars directly within the same topic.⁹

⁷ Abdurrahman Bin Muhammad 'Iwadh Al-Juzairi, *Al-Fiqh 'Alaa Madzahib Al-Arba'ah*, Cet. 1, Juz 1 (Dar Al-Fikr, 2003), p. 5.

⁸ Reza Reza Arya Putra, "Kafa'ah as a Consideration in Marriage According to Wahbah Al-Zuhaili in the Book of Al Fiqh Islami wa Adillatuhu".

⁹ Muhammad Jawad Mughniyah, *Fiqh Lima Madhhab: Ja'fari, Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hambali*. (Intensive Peace, 2015).



However, the differences presented in this book are not limited to legal comparisons alone, but also reflect differences in methods of interpreting the same religious texts (*nash*). Each school of thought uses different approaches in *usul al-fiqh* to understand the Qur'an and Hadith. Although the evidence used is often the same, the resulting legal rulings may differ due to variations in understanding wording, context of hadith, strength of narration, and the application of analogy (*qiyas*) and consensus (*ijma'*).

In the discussion of the beginning time of the 'Isha prayer, for example, all schools refer to the hadith regarding the disappearance of twilight (*syafaq*) as the sign for the entrance of 'Isha time. However, differences arise in interpreting the meaning of *syafaq* itself. The Hanafi school interprets *syafaq* as the white twilight (*syafaq abyadh*) that appears after the disappearance of the red twilight, while the Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools interpret it as the red twilight (*syafaq ahmar*) that appears after sunset.

This difference shows that jurisprudential issues do not always lie in differences of textual evidence, but often in differences of interpretation of the same text. The Hanafi school views the disappearance of the white twilight as a clearer indication of the complete arrival of night, while the majority of scholars (*jumhur ulama*) consider the disappearance of the red twilight sufficient as a sign for the beginning of 'Isha time.¹⁰ This interpretation is also influenced by the geographical conditions of each region, which affect observations of celestial phenomena.

Furthermore, *Al-Fiqh 'Alaa Madzahib al-Arba'ah* also explains the supporting arguments for each opinion, so readers not only know the legal conclusions but also understand the scholarly reasoning behind these differences.¹¹ This approach is very important because it helps readers understand that scholarly disagreement (*ikhtilaf*) is the result of *ijtihad* based on strong arguments, rather than differences without foundation.

Thus, this book holds significant value in developing a moderate and contextual understanding of Islamic jurisprudence. Muslims can understand that differences among schools of thought represent the breadth of mercy within Islamic law. The study of this book also provides space for readers to understand the flexibility of Islamic law in responding to different social, cultural, and geographical conditions.

Therefore, *Al-Fiqh 'Alaa Madzahib al-Arba'ah* functions not only as a book of comparative jurisprudence but also as an important reference for understanding the methodology of legal deduction (*istinbath al-ahkam*) among scholars. In the context of this research, the book serves as the main source for examining how differences in interpreting the concept of *syafaq* give rise to variations in determining the beginning time of the 'Isha prayer among the four major Islamic schools of thought.

2. Legal Basis of Isha Prayer

Isha prayer is one of the obligatory prayers that has specifically prescribed times as explained in the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet. The explanation regarding the time of

¹⁰ Siti Muslifah, "A Critical Study of Shafaqul Ahmar and Shafaqul Abyadh on the End of Maghrib and the Beginning of Isha'," *Ephesians* 1, No. 1 (2017).

¹¹ Al-Juzairi, *Al-Fiqh 'Alaa Madzahib al-Arba'ah*, Juz 1.



Isha prayer is important because it is directly related to the valid performance of worship in accordance with Islamic law. In this context, the legal basis of Isha prayer not only indicates the obligation to perform it, but also determines the time limits for its observance, which serve as guidance for Muslims.

The legal basis regarding the time of Isha prayer in the Qur'an is found in QS. Al-Isra': 78:¹²

”أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْءَانَ الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْءَانَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا“

"Establish prayer from the declining of the sun until the darkness of the night, and also (establish) the Fajr prayer. Indeed, the Fajr prayer is witnessed (by the angels)."

In this verse, the phrase *غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ* is interpreted as the coming of the darkness of the night.

Qur'anic commentators explain that this meaning includes the times of Maghrib and Isha prayers, particularly indicating the beginning of Isha time after the disappearance of syafaq (the red twilight on the western horizon after sunset). Thus, this verse serves as the basis that Isha prayer is performed at night after the end of Maghrib time.

A more detailed explanation regarding the time limits of Isha prayer is explained in the Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ:¹³

”وَقْتُ الْعِشَاءِ إِلَى نِصْفِ اللَّيْلِ“

"The time of the Isha prayer lasts until midnight."

This hadith is narrated from Abdullah bin Amr, that the Prophet ﷺ explained the time limit of every obligatory prayer, including Isha which lasts until midnight. This hadith is the main basis in determining the deadline for the Isha prayer, which is until midnight, so its implementation is recommended not to exceed this limit except in certain circumstances.

Another hadith also explains the practice of the Prophet ﷺ in ending the Isha prayer:¹⁴

”كَانُوا يُصَلُّونَ الْعَتَمَةَ فِيمَا بَيْنَ أَنْ يَغِيبَ الشَّفَقُ إِلَى ثُلُثِ اللَّيْلِ الْأَوَّلِ“

"They used to perform the Isha prayer between the time of the setting of Shafaq until the first third of the night."

¹² Abd Karim Faiz, *Prayer and Dawn Time (Shar'i, Hisabi and Observation)*, ed. by Muhammad Majdy Amiruddin and Suhartina Suhartina.

¹³ Iif Riansa and Darlius Darlius, "Formulation of Prayer Time from the Perspective of Four Imams of the Madhhab," *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research* 3, no. 6 (2023): 8625–40.

¹⁴ Riansa and Darlius, "Formulation of Prayer Time from the Perspective of Four Imams of the Madhhab."



This hadith shows that the Prophet ﷺ once performed the Isha prayer by ending the time of its implementation until the first third of the night. This shows that there is a leniency in the implementation of the Isha Prayer as long as it is still within the permissible time limit.

Based on this legal basis, it can be understood that the time of the Isha prayer begins after the loss of syafaq as a sign of the end of the Maghrib time and lasts until midnight as explained in the Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ. This provision is a normative basis that can be used as a touchstone in research analysis, especially in assessing the implementation of the Isha prayer in congregation and its conformity with the provisions of Islamic law. Thus, the Qur'an and Hadith are the main foundation in strengthening the analysis of the implementation of the Isha Prayer in the religious life of the community.

3. The Beginning of the Isha Prayer According to the Four Madhhabs

As already known, the end of Maghrib time marks the entry of Isha time. The condition of the western horizon after sunset can be categorized into three, namely: red, white, and then blackened. In the discussion of astronomy, the condition of the sky after sunset is divided into 3 classifications, civil/madany (*civil twilight*), shipping/bahry (*nautical twilight*) and astronomy/falaky (*astronomical twilight*).¹⁵ In general, the time of the Isha prayer is in the position where the Sun is at the end of *astronomical twilight*, which is when the Sun is 18° below the horizon. This position is a characteristic of the beginning of night because the light from the stars begins to be clearly visible due to the distribution of the Sun's light that begins to disappear.¹⁶

Meanwhile, the end of the Isha prayer time imposed by the Indonesian Ministry of Religion is when the dawn of dawn shadiq is also a sign of the entry of the Fajr prayer time.¹⁷ If viewed based on *the twilight category*, the position of the Sun at the beginning of Fajr is slightly higher than the *astronomical position of twilight*, which is 20° below the horizon before sunrise. The determination of the timing of Isha is based on the opinions of scholars from the four schools. The determination of the time of Isha by the Prophet Muhammad is based on the instructions given by the Prophet Muhammad in his Hadiths. The following are the opinions conveyed by the scholars compiled by *Shaykh Abdurrahman Al-Juzairi*:¹⁸

a. Hanafi School

The Hanafi school explained that the determination of the end of the Maghrib prayer time is closely related to the meaning of the shafaq (twilight light) that appears on the western horizon after sunset. According to Hanafiyah scholars, the western horizon after sunset experiences

¹⁵ Namira Marizkia Milinia Namira dan Eva Puspitasari, "Astronomical Review of the Pandita Board (Wong-Wong and Tike Lime) in Determining Good Days in Banyu Urip Village," *AL - AFAQ : Journal of Astronomy and Astronomy* 7, no. 1 (2025).

¹⁶ Lidya Safrida and Machzumy Machzumy, "Astronomical Analysis of Twilight as a Sign of Early Determination of the Isha Prayer Time," *Astroislamica: Journal Of Islamic Astronomy* 1, No. 1 (2022): 47–72.

¹⁷ Hendri Hendri, "The Phenomenon of Shadiq's Dawn Marks the Beginning of Fajr Prayer Time, Sunrise, and the Beginning of Dhuha Time," *Al-Hurriyah: Journal of Islamic Law* 2, No. 2 (2017): 149–68.

¹⁸ Al-Juzairi, *Al-Fiqh 'Alaa Madzahib Al-Arba'ah*, Juz 1.



three conditions that occur in order, namely reddish, then white, and then dark. Differences of opinion arise in determining the meaning of shafaq, because the term shafaq has a double meaning (isytirāk) in Arabic.

In the book *Al-Fiqh 'ala al-Madzahib al-Arba'ah* it is explained:¹⁹

الْحَنِيفِيَّةُ قَالُوا: إِنَّ الْأُفُقَ الْعَرَبِيَّ يَعْتَرِيهِ بَعْدَ الْعُرُوبِ أَحْوَالٌ ثَلَاثَةٌ مُتَعَاقِبَةٌ: أَحْمَرًا، فَبَيَاضًا، فَسَوَادًا؛ فَالشَّفَقُ عِنْدَ أَبِي حَنِيفَةَ هُوَ الْبَيَاضُ، وَعَيْبَتُهُ ظُهُورُ السَّوَادِ بَعْدَهُ، فَمَتَى ظَهَرَ السَّوَادُ خَرَجَ وَقْتُ الْمَغْرِبِ؛ أَمَّا الصَّاحِبَانِ فَالشَّفَقُ عِنْدَهُمَا مَا ذُكِرَ أَعْلَى الصَّحِيفَةِ كَالْأَيِّمَةِ الثَّلَاثَةِ

"The Hanafi school is of the opinion that the western horizon after sunset experiences three conditions in succession, namely redness, then whitishness, and then darkness. According to Abu Hanifah, the shafaq is white, and the loss of the shafaq is marked by the appearance of darkness afterwards. When darkness has appeared, then the time of Maghrib has ended. As for Abu Hanifah's two disciples, namely Abu Yusuf and Muhammad bin Hasan, he is of the opinion that the shahaq is the same as the opinion of the other three imams."

Based on this opinion, Imam Abu Hanifah is of the opinion that the Maghrib prayer time has not ended as long as the western horizon still appears white. The end of Maghrib only occurs when the white light disappears and the sky begins to appear dark. Thus, according to him, the end limit of Maghrib is not only determined by the loss of red light, but must wait until the white light on the western horizon completely disappears.

This opinion is also explained in the book *Al-Muhit al-Burhani* as follows:

وَتَفْسِيرُ الشَّفَقِ فِي قَوْلِ أَبِي حَنِيفَةَ رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ: الْبَيَاضُ الَّذِي يَكُونُ فِي جَانِبِ الْمَغْرِبِ

"The explanation of shahaq according to Abu Hanifah (may Allah have mercy on him) is the white mega that is in the western part (after sunset)."

The jurists differ in the interpretation of syafaq because the term has a polygamous meaning, like the word fajar in Arabic. Imam Abu Hanifah is of the opinion that Shafaq is a white cloud, because if the white light has disappeared, then surely the previous red light has also disappeared.²⁰ The horizon does not really darken except after the disappearance of the white light, because even though the red light has disappeared, the white light is still visible. Therefore, he determined that the shafaq that marks the end of the Maghrib time is the white light.

b. Madhhab Maliki

The Maliki school explains that the time of Isha prayer begins from the disappearance of syafaq ahmar (red light) on the western horizon after sunset. Malikiyah scholars divide the time of Isha into two parts, namely the time of ikhtiyari (time of choice) and the time of daruri (time of

¹⁹ Al-Juzairi, *Al-Fiqh 'Ala Madzahib Al-Arba'ah*, Juz 1, pp. 174 -176.

²⁰ Muslifah, "A Critical Study of Shafaqul Ahmar and Shafaqul Abyadh on the End of Maghrib and the Beginning of Isha'."



emergency). This division shows that there is a difference between the most important time to carry out prayers and the time that is still allowed due to certain needs or ages. In the book *Al-Fiqh 'ala al-Madzahib al-Arba'ah* 168 it is explained:²¹

الْمَالِكِيُّهٖ قَالُوا: إِنَّ وَقْتَ الْعِشَاءِ الْإِحْتِيَارِيِّ يَبْتَدِئُ مِنْ مَغِيبِ الشَّفَقِ الْأَحْمَرِ، وَيَنْتَهِي بِانْتِهَاءِ الثُّلُثِ الْأَوَّلِ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ، وَوَقْتُهَا الضَّرُورِيُّ مَا كَانَ عَقِبَ ذَلِكَ إِلَى طُلُوعِ الْفَجْرِ، فَمَنْ صَلَّى الْعِشَاءَ فِي الْوَقْتِ الضَّرُورِيِّ أَثِمَ إِلَّا إِذَا كَانَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْأَعْذَارِ

"The Maliki school is of the opinion that the time of the Isha prayer begins with the loss of the red shafaq and ends with the end of the first third of the night. The emergency time is after that until dawn. Whoever performs the Isha prayer in an emergency, then he sins unless he is a person who has an uzur."

Based on this explanation, the time of effort for the Isha prayer begins when the red light on the horizon has disappeared and ends at the first third of the night. This time is the most important time to carry out the Isha prayer. As for after the end of the time until dawn, it enters the time of daruri, which is the time that is still valid to carry out prayers, but its implementation without being rude is considered makruh and even sinful according to some Malikiyah scholars.

Explanations about the beginning of the time of Isha have also been put forward by many Malikiyah scholars, one of which is by Ibrahim ad-Dasuqi in the book *Hasyiyah ad-Dasuqi Volume 1*, 305 he stated:²²

لِلْعِشَاءِ مِنْ غُرُوبِ حُمْرَةِ الشَّفَقِ لِلثُّلُثِ الْأَوَّلِ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ

"The time of Isha lasts from the disappearance of the reddish shafaq to the first third of the night."

Thus, the Maliki school stipulates that the beginning of the time of the Isha prayer begins with the disappearance of the red cloud on the western horizon, while the main time lasts until the first third of the night. After that, the time of Isha still continues until dawn as an emergency time for people who have sharia uzur.

c. Hambali School

Hambali scholars argue that the time for the implementation of the Isha Prayer is divided into two categories like the Asar Prayer, namely the time of effort and the time of emergency. The time of effort begins from the disappearance of syafaq or red cloud on the western horizon until the first third of the night has passed. The emergency time lasts from the beginning of the second third of the night until the dawn of shadiq. If a person performs the Isha prayer in an emergency without any uzur, then he is still considered a sinner even though his prayer is still counted as

²¹ Al-Juzairi, *Al-Fiqh 'Alaa Madzahib Al-Arba'ah*, Juz 1, p. 168.

²² Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Al-Dasuqi, *Hasyiyah Al-Dasuqi 'Ala Al-Syarh Al-Kabir*, Cet. 1, Volume 1 (Dar Al-Fikr, 2004).



ada'an (performed on time). This is as explained in *the book Fiqh 'ala al-Madzahib al-Arba'ah* by Abdurrahman al-Jaziri:²³

الْحَنَابِلَةُ قَالُوا: إِنَّ لِلْعِشَاءِ وَقْتَيْنِ كَالْعَصْرِ: وَقْتُ اخْتِيَارِيٍّ، وَهُوَ مِنْ مَغِيبِ الشَّفَقِ إِلَى مُضِيِّ ثُلُثِ اللَّيْلِ
الْأَوَّلِ، وَوَقْتُ ضَرُورَةٍ، وَهُوَ مِنْ أَوَّلِ الثُّلُثِ الثَّانِي مِنَ اللَّيْلِ إِلَى طُلُوعِ الْفَجْرِ الصَّادِقِ، فَمَنْ أَوْقَعَ الصَّلَاةَ فِيهِ
"كَانَ آثِمًا، وَإِنْ كَانَتْ صَلَاتُهُ آدَاءً، أَمَّا الصُّبْحُ وَالظُّهْرُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَلَيْسَ لَهَا وَقْتُ ضَرُورَةٍ، كَمَا تَقَدَّمَ قَرِيبًا

"Hambali scholars state that the Isha prayer has two times, namely the time of choice and the time of emergency. The time of choice starts from the loss of shafaq until the first third of the night, while the emergency time starts from the beginning of the second third of the night until the dawn of shadiq".

There is no difference of opinion regarding the beginning of the Isha prayer time, which is when the reddish color disappears in the sky after sunset. The Hambali school emphasizes that shafaq is a sign of the end of the Maghrib time as well as the beginning of the entry of the time of Isha, and what is meant by shafaq is the red light on the western horizon. This opinion was also held by *Ibn Abbas, Atha', Ibn Umar, Sa'id bin Jubair, Az-Zuhri, Mujahid, Ats-Tsauri, Malik, Ibn Abi Laila, Ishaq, Ash-Shafi'i*, and two disciples of *Abu Hanifah*.²⁴

Ibn Qudamah explained that the loss of reddish color is a sign of the entry of Isha time when a person is in a place where the horizon is open and can be observed directly. However, if a person is in a place where the horizon is obstructed, then he can notice the change in the color of the sky until white appears. The appearance of the white light is an indication that the red color has completely disappeared, so that the time of Isha has entered. Thus, according to the Hambali School, the beginning of the time of Isha begins with the disappearance of the red mega, while the final limit lasts until dawn, with the priority of implementation being in the first third of the night.

d. Madhhab Shafi'i

In the book *Al-Fiqh 'Alaa Madzahib Al-Arba'ah* it is not explained in detail about the beginning of the Isha prayer according to the Shafi'i Madhhab. However, this explanation can be found directly in *Muhammad Bin Idris As-Shafi'i, Al-um Bait Al-Ifkar Ad-Daulah*. Imam Shafi'i in *Arafat* explained as follows:²⁵

، قَالَ الشَّافِعِيُّ: فَأَحِبُّ أَنْ لَا تُسَمَّى إِلَّا الْعِشَاءُ كَمَا سَمَّاهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ لَهُ، وَأَوَّلُ وَقْتِهَا حِينَ يَغِيبُ الشَّفَقُ
وَالشَّفَقُ الْحُمْرَةُ الَّتِي فِي الْمَغْرِبِ، فَإِذَا ذَهَبَتِ الْحُمْرَةُ، فَلَمْ يَرِ مِنْهَا شَيْءٌ، حَلَّ وَقْتُهَا، وَمَنْ افْتَتَحَهَا، وَقَدْ بَقِيَ
"عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْحُمْرَةِ شَيْءٌ أَعَادَهَا

²³ Al-Juzairi, *Al-Fiqh 'Alaa Madzahib Al-Arba'ah*, Juz 1, pp. 168 - 169.

²⁴ Muslifah, "A Critical Study of Shafaqul Ahmar and Shafaqul Abyadh on the End of Maghrib and the Beginning of Isha'."

²⁵ Muhammad Husni Arafat, *Epistemology of Classical Interpretation: A Critical Study of the Concept of Sunnah Thought by Muhammad bin Idris Al-Shafi'i (150-204 Ah.)* (Deepublish, 2016).



“Imam Shafi’i said: I prefer that this prayer is not called by any other name than Isha, as the Prophet PBUH named it. The beginning of time is when the shafaq has disappeared, and the shafaq in question is the reddish color that appears on the western horizon after sunset. If the red color has completely disappeared and is no longer visible, then the time of Isha has arrived. Whoever performs the Isha prayer while there is still a little red left, then he is obliged to repeat it.”

This explanation shows that Imam Shafi’i expressly interpreted shafaq as red light (*shafaq ahmar*), not white light. Thus, the beginning of the time of the Isha prayer according to the Shafi’i school began when the red light on the western horizon had completely disappeared.

Based on this opinion, it can be understood that the Shafi’i school establishes the beginning of the time of Isha with the disappearance of red shaq on the western horizon. Astronomically, this condition occurs when the Sun is about 18° below the horizon. This provision is also the basis that is widely used in determining prayer schedules in Indonesia, including by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This is different from the Hanafi school which sets the beginning of Isha after the loss of white shaq, so there is a time difference of a few minutes in its implementation.

4. Analysis of the Difference in Time of Isha Prayer

In the study of the four schools of fiqh, there are differences of opinion regarding the beginning of the time of the Isha Prayer, especially in understanding the meaning of *shahaq* as a sign of the end of the Maghrib time and the beginning of the Isha time. This difference, although seemingly small, has important implications for the implementation of worship, because it is directly related to the punctuality of prayer. The Hanafi school of thought that the beginning of the time of Isha begins after the disappearance of the white light on the western horizon (*syafaq abyadh*), that is, when the sky is completely dark and the rest of the twilight is no longer visible.²⁶ In astronomical studies, this condition coincides with the Sun's position of about 18°–20° below the western horizon or near the end *of astronomical twilight*.

Meanwhile, the Maliki, Shafi’i, and Hambali schools argue that the time of Isha begins after the disappearance of red light on the western horizon (*syafaq ahmar*). In modern astronomical approaches, this condition generally occurs when the Sun is at an altitude of about 15°–18° below the horizon.²⁷ Thus, there is practically a time difference between the opinions of the Hanafi school and the other three schools, which can range from 10 to 20 minutes depending on the geographical location and the season.

To clarify this difference, the following is presented a comparative simulation of the early time of Isha in two conditions of the Sun's position, namely when the Sun is in the north and when the Sun is in the south against the territory of Indonesia.

Table 4.1 Comparison of the Beginning of the Isha Time Based on the Position of the Sun

²⁶ Riansa and Darlius, "Formulation of Prayer Time from the Perspective of Four Imams of the Madhhab."

²⁷ Safrida and Machzumy, "Astronomical Analysis of Twilight as a Sign of Early Determination of the Time of Isha Prayer."



Location	Position of the Sun	The Beginning of Isha According to Jumhur (Red Shafaq)	The Beginning of Isha According to Hanafi (White Shafaq)	Differences
São Paulo	Sun in the North (June)	06:12 PM	06.27 PM local time	15 minutes
São Paulo	Sun in the South (December)	06:42 PM	06.53 PM local time	11 minutes
Surabaya	Sun in the North (June)	06.05 PM	06.19 PM local time	14 minutes
Surabaya	Sun in the South (December)	06.35 PM	06.45 PM local time	10 minutes

The data shows that when the Sun is in the north (around June), the duration of twilight tends to be longer than when the Sun is in the south (around December). As a result, the time of the loss of white light lasts more slowly, so the difference between the opinions of the Hanafi and the jumhur becomes greater. On the other hand, when the Sun is in the south, the process of setting the twilight proceeds faster so the time difference becomes shorter.

This difference is even more evident in high-latitude regions such as Iraq, where Imam Abu Hanifah lived and thrived. The cities of Kufa and Baghdad are at higher latitudes than Indonesia, so the twilight phenomenon lasts longer, especially in summer. In these conditions, the white light after the setting of the red cloud still lasts quite a long time, even reaching 60-75 minutes. This is different from equatorial regions such as Indonesia which only takes an average of 20-30 minutes. This geographical factor is strongly suspected to influence the ijtiḥad of Imam Abu Hanifah in determining the beginning of the time of Isha based on the loss of white shahaq.

Some of the factors that affect the differences of opinion among the scholars include:

a. Differences in Interpretation of Shafaq

Imam Abu Hanifah gave a different interpretation of the meaning of the shahaq mentioned in the hadiths about the time of Isha. The hadith on which he based his thinking is:²⁸

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: وَأَخْرُ وَقْتِ الْمَغْرِبِ إِذَا اسْوَدَّ الْأُفُقُ

"Indeed, the Prophet PBUH said: the end of Maghrib is when the horizon is dark."

The word اسْوَدَّ is interpreted as completely dark or blackened with no residual light. Therefore, Imam Abu Hanifah understood the intercession as a white cloud, because when the white light has disappeared, it is certain that the red light has disappeared first and the sky is completely dark.

²⁸ Moh Nasrudin, *Ulumul Hadith: For Tarbiyah / Teacher Training Students* (Nem Publishers, 2024).



In contrast to the majority of scholars who interpret syafaq as a red light (*syafaq ahmar*).²⁹ Astronomically, this red light appears as a result of the scattering of Sunlight by the Earth's atmosphere, especially when the blue wavelengths are scattered first and all that remains is the red and yellow spectrums.

b. Proximity of Time to Day

The physiological condition of human vision is also one of the factors that affect the determination of the early time of Isha. Slamet Hambali in the Postgraduate lecture of Astronomy explained that after the eyes are exposed to bright light throughout the day, the eye's sensitivity to dim light decreases.³⁰ This makes white shafaq more difficult to observe visually.

In contrast to the time of Fajr, when the eyes have become accustomed to dark conditions throughout the night so that the white light of dawn shadiq is easier to recognize. In this condition, the eyes are more sensitive to small changes in light. This visual habit factor may explain why some scholars emphasize the loss of red light which is easier to observe than the fainter white light.

c. Location and Season

Geographical and seasonal factors are also very influential in determining the beginning of the time of Isha. Imam Abu Hanifah lives in Iraq which has a higher latitude than Indonesia. In summer, the length of day and night is unbalanced, for example, the day reaches 14 hours and the night is only about 10 hours. This condition causes astronomical twilight to last longer.³¹

If in an equatorial region like Indonesia the astronomical twilight lasts about 24 minutes on average, then in an area like Kufa it can reach 65–75 minutes.³² This long duration of twilight causes the white light to last longer after the red light has disappeared. Therefore, it is very natural for Imam Abu Hanifah to establish the beginning of Isha after the disappearance of white shahaq, because this phenomenon is more evident in his area.

Thus, differences of opinion regarding the beginning of the time of the Isha prayer are not a form of contradiction, but the result of the *ijtihad* of scholars based on the understanding of the hadith, astronomical conditions, and geographical reality of each one. Quantitative analysis shows that the position of the Sun in the north and south also affects the length of twilight and the difference in the time difference in the beginning of Isha. This shows that the science of astronomy and fiqh complement each other in providing a more comprehensive understanding of the determination of the time of worship in Islam.

D. Conclusion

²⁹ Nurfadillah Surya et al., "The Time of Afdal of the Implementation of the Isha Prayer from a Fiqh Perspective: A Study on the Principles of Al-Khuru'j Min Al-Khilaf Al-Mustahab: The Time of Afdal of the Implementation of the Isha Prayer from a Fiqh Perspective: A Study on the Principles of Al-Khuru'j Min Al-Khilaf Al-Mustahab," *Ephesians* 9, No. 2 (2025).

³⁰ Annisa Nurfadilah et al., "The Typology of Fajar in Fiqh and Science: An Integrative Study of Fajar Kizib and Fajar Sadik: Indonesia," *Ephesians* 9, no. 2 (2025): 353–73.

³¹ Safrida and Machzumy, "Astronomical Analysis of Twilight as a Sign of Early Determination of the Time of Isha Prayer."

³² Jannah, *Determining the Timing of Maghrib, Isha, and Fajr Prayers from a Fiqh and Astronomical Perspective*.



The determination of the beginning of the time of the Isha prayer is one of the fiqh issues that cause differences of opinion among the scholars of the four schools, especially in understanding the meaning of syafaq as a sign of the end of the Maghrib time and the entry of the Isha time. The Hanafi school of thought that shafaq is white light (shafaq abyadh), so the beginning of the time of Isha begins after the disappearance of white light on the western horizon. Meanwhile, the Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools argue that shafaq is a red light (shafaq ahmar), so that the beginning of the time of Isha begins after the disappearance of red light. This difference shows that the problem of fiqh does not always lie in differences in evidence, but also in differences in interpretation of the same nash.

These differences are influenced by various factors such as the interpretation of the hadith, geographical conditions, astronomical observations, and the legal istinbath of each imam of the sect. In the Indonesian context, the opinions of many scholars are more widely used because they are considered to be in accordance with the geographical conditions of the equatorial region and are the basis for determining the prayer schedule by the Ministry of Religion. Thus, the difference in the beginning of the Isha prayer time is not a form of contradiction, but the result of the ijtihad of the ulama which shows the breadth and flexibility of Islamic jurisprudence in responding to different conditions.

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