

Indivisible Inheritance and Its (Islamic) Rulings: The Economics of Private Funds and Its Impact on Children's Healthy Futures

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ABSTRACT

Courts hear many lawsuits related to indivisible inheritance, or whose distribution harms the heirs' benefit. Such heirs' viewpoints may vary from accepting their share, even if it is impossible to benefit from, and refusing it by demanding to sell the entire inheritance and thus distributing it financially. All of this has a set of important Islamic rulings and regulations.

Courts of KSA (the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) have distinguished procedures towards inheritance. These procedures achieve justice for every heir and maintains his right. Furthermore, KSA courts have good experience in handling indivisible inheritance cases.

The research objectives are:

- 1- Achieving justice in distributing inheritance and establishing good relations and kinship ties between heirs.
- 2- Developing a number of rulings related to practically indivisible inheritance and demonstrating them in an academic study.
- 3- Proving the ability of Sharīʿah (Islamic Law) to find appropriate solutions to people's contemporary issues in their daily lives.

This research concluded a set of important and relevant proposals which will be cited at the end.

Keywords: inheritance - distribution - lawsuits – justice.

1. INTRODUCTION

Severe disputes often occur between heirs after their legator's death for many reasons, including: monopolizing the entire inheritance by the eldest or the most powerful heir and thus depriving the rest of their rights, especially women. It may also involve winning a vastly superior share that would bring a significant personal profit, while others get inferior shares that do not bring them as much profit as the share of their chief who lords it over them. Furthermore, there is a type of inheritance that cannot be equally divided, causing quarrels, differences, and disputes between heirs, and thus some of them sue. Therefore, this research develops a number of related rulings and regulations.

Statement of the problems and questions

This research addresses a prime question: what is meant by indivisible inheritance?

Branching out from this main question is a number of sub-questions that are closely related to developing the rulings and regulations of inheritance division with which heirs may find complications if it is distributed according to their shares' proportions. For instance, small real estates, gold of different carats, extremely small and precise jewels, and other similar cases that will be detailed in the research.

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Reasons for choosing the topic

Reasons can be summarized in two points:

First: the urgent need to develop a number of jurisprudential rulings related to indivisible inheritance or whose distribution harms its use thereof.

Second: monitoring family disputes between heirs in the judiciary.

Research objectives

The most important objectives of this research are as follows:

- 1- Promoting research orientations of Najran University regarding the contemporary jurisprudential issues discipline.
- 2- Contributing to spreading harmony, love and understanding among heirs after their legator's death.
- 3- Studying numerous cases in this regard and demonstrating them in an academic study.
- 4- Proving the ability of *Sharīʿah* to resolve disputes between litigants in a way that achieves complete justice for all of them.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

After careful research and investigation by the researchers, within the limits and scope of their resources, they found some excerpts of articles related to the topic, but they do not live up to the level and content of this research.

The applied scholarly approach

This type of research requires adopting the inductive analytical approach which based on developing the regulations and rulings to indivisible inheritance or whose distribution harms its utilization thereof.

Research plan and procedures

This research consists of an introduction, three sections, a conclusion, a set of proposals, and an index of sources and references as follows:

Introduction: contains a summary for the research, a statement of its significance, problems and questions, the reasons behind choosing such a topic, the research's objectives, the literature review, the applied scholarly approach and the research's plan.

Section one: clarifying the vocabulary of the research title.

Section two: reasons of inheritance distribution inability.

Section three: proposed solutions for inheritance property that cannot be divided.

Conclusion: contains the most important findings and proposals of the research.

Index of topics.

Index of sources and references.

Section one

Clarifying the vocabulary of the research title

The proposed title for this research is: "Indivisible inheritance and its (Islamic) rulings". This requires clarifying the vocabulary that makes up such a title.

1- **Inheritance:** linguistically is the transfer of something from one to another.

Terminologically, inheritance is a divisible right that is given to a deserving recipient after the death of the original owner due to a kinship relation or so.

The above-mentioned definitions have implications, including:

- a) A deceased legator is characterized by death, so his property gets out of his possession. On the other hand, the living inheritor is characterized by survival, so such property is transferred to him. Therefore, inheritance is the transfer of property from a dead person to a living one.
- b) The deceased legator is just one individual, but his heir/s may be one, two, or more.
- c) The inherited property is either entirely transferred to one person, male or female (in the state of being alone), or is divided between more than one person.
- d) Kinship relation between a deceased legator and a living heir is the one legally authorized to transfer

inheritance.

- e) A deceased legator has left the world and his possessions, while heirs are going through a new experience with these possessions.
- f) There is a close connection between the linguistic and the terminological definitions for the term "inheritance". Among its linguistic meanings are:
 - Survival: according to Islamic law, whoever among heirs is alive, is entitled to what their legator has left behind.
 - Transferring something from one to another: this is what happens with property which is transferred after a legator's death to the ownership of his heir. The legator was also an heir before, and so forth until property is destroyed and there is no room left for inheritance.
 - **Origin:** the relationship between a legator and an heir is a relationship between an origin who has properties that are transferred after his death to his ascendants, branches, or collateral relatives.
 - **Antiquity:** every property acquired by an heir in a present time devolved to him from someone owned it in a past time.
 - **Remnant of everything:** this applies to a property of a legator who had several properties that decreased over time, and what remains is devolved to heirs.
- 2- **Distribution inability:** that is inability to divide inheritance for one of the reasons to be mentioned.
- 3- **Inheritance distribution inability rulings:** that depends on every inherited property circumstances. Each case is subject to a legal ruling or a jurisprudential provision, which will be explained in the following section.

Section two

Reasons of inheritance distribution inability

The simplicity of our ancestors' life facilitated the process of inheritance property distribution. However, the researchers did not find related cases in books of contemporary jurisprudential issues, despite their abundance, during their auspicious era. Disputes have spread only recently, and courts are the best evidence of lawsuits brought by some heirs against each other. Reasons why inheritance cannot be distributed can be summarized in some points, the most important of which are the following:

1- The inherited property may be of great value but this value will decrease if the property is divided among the heirs according to their shares. Thereby, what each heir obtains may be valueless, and in this case dividing the property may be considered foolish. Logic and reasoning require that they should sell such property first in order to obtain abundant money. This superior interest outweighs an inferior mischief if they divide a painting, thinking -mistakenly- to gain considerable money. Jurists established a legal maxim stating "giving priority to a major interest over an inferior harm".

There are many examples of this pattern in our reality. For instance, when a legator artist bequeaths an oil painting whose value is in the form that he left, with its dimensions, paper, oils, colors, shapes, connotations, history, and his autograph. Given his great fame, his paintings are sought after by fans and auctioneers. If his heirs decided to divide this painting among them, their action would be foolish. This is because dividing the painting into pieces takes away from its value, and what each heir gets is not considered a painting, but rather a mutilated part removed from a complete, precious painting. Furthermore, if an heir insists on getting a part containing the legator's autograph, another may insist on getting a part that he likes, and some other may refuse to divide the painting and instead demands that it has to be sold and the earned money be shared. Consequently, dispute, quarrel, disagreement and severing ties occur and perhaps some of them may file lawsuits against each other in courts. Normally, when relatives seek judiciary due to dispute, their kinship ties are greatly harmed and they probably be afflicted with severing these ties that they used to strengthen during their legator's life. This is pure corruption that must be avoided by the interest of agreeing on the sale and each party getting their share. As for what some heirs think by gaining personal interests through cutting off part of the painting is an assumed interest that brings about an actual harm. What is established among jurists and scholars of 'Uṣūl is that "Preventing corruption takes precedence over bringing about interest". It is more appropriate that preventing actual harm should take precedence over bringing about a suspected interest.

2- Lack of an expert who can justly divide the inherited material without causing harm to it, such as expensive jewels, especially diamond, which is a very precious metal. If a legator bequeaths a rare diamond, dividing it requires an expert to cut. Some experts use lasers to achieve accurate segmentation that does not affect the structure of a diamond, or scatters its spray so that it is wasted. In such a case, the inability of having an expert

is a reason for disrupting the division process. Although the inherited material is present, it cannot be transmitted to heirs despite their agreement on the precise division. The original rule is to start distributing estate and transmitting it to heirs without delay, except for a reason recognized by *Sharīʿah* or law. However, this could be solved if the heirs either:

- a) Delay distribution until they find an expert to divide, and his fee is paid jointly by all of them.
- b) Hasten to sale and then distribute the money according to their shares in the inheritance.
- 3- A particular part of inheritance may be distinguished with a higher value than other parts, so disputes occur between heirs over such a part regarding whoever wins it. For instance, if a real estate has in one part a source of water or oil or alike, or has precious minerals inside, or this part is distinguished by fruit trees while the rest parts have barren soil, or stony soil, or wasteland, or hard soil. Such a distinct part may also overlook a public road full of shops, while the rest parts are in a back area with no traffic. In another case, a real estate may consist of separate plots, some of which are easy to reach and be useful thereof, while the rest are far from reach and are out of use. If, in the above, the real estate is divided among the heirs equally in terms of area, there would be a large discrepancy in terms of value, the matter which would be impossible to divide the real estate accordingly, and thus leads to heirs' dispute.
- Extreme high prices. Sometimes, a property is transferred to heirs, containing houses and homes in which they all lived with their legator before his death. If they sell it and distribute the money according to their shares in inheritance, it would be impossible for each one to buy another home with his share due to high prices, and thereby they agree not to divide the property, and decide to live there. By doing so, they disrupt the process of distribution -that is mandated by Islamic law immediately after the death of the legator- in anticipation of an increase in the value of the property in the future, or a desire to use the money in trade, or other valid purposes. From an Islamic perspective, there is nothing wrong with this delay, as long as the heirs are adults and agree to keep the estate unchanged so that one of them, or an agent, can care about and develop it. That may be applied if the estate is a farm and one of the heirs maintains it, or they assign someone to take care of it, or if the estate is a building that is rented out and they get their share of rent through the agent, or through one of them. All of this is fine if they are adults. Likewise, if the property is money and heirs appointed someone among them to trade with it, then there is nothing wrong, because the money is theirs. If they agree on something, then it is valid as long as they are eligible. However, if there is no division between the first class of heirs, one should pay attention to what usually happens in a subsequent generation, such as disputes, disagreements and accusations, which take them to courts. Litigation may take a long time and they have to pay costs of lawyers. Therefore, taking the initiative to divide bequest remains the best decision for the heirs to make.
- 5- Entanglement in those entitled to inheritance. This is one of the negatives of delaying inheritance distribution immediately after a legator's death. Time will go on, age will expire, and generations of grandchildren, male and female, will arise, intermingling and marrying, and it becomes difficult to distinguish those who are entitled to the inheritance from those who are not legally entitled to it. Based on this suspicion, it is once again impossible to distribute inheritance.
- 6- A bequest is money of different currencies. For instance, when a deceased bequeaths a variety of different currencies such as dollars, euros, and riyals, and his heirs decide to wait for each currency's value to rise. It is impossible to distribute the money during this period. There is nothing wrong with such a case as mentioned above as along as all heirs agree as it seems a major interest, on the condition that this delay does not take a long time, because the currency's value may fall and the heirs may regret. For this reason, the original rule is to hasten distribution immediately after the legator's death. This is better, sensible, and safe, and it hastens the arrival of reward to the legator by making his heirs benefit from his property. Otherwise, delaying distribution delays reward to legator, although dead people are most in need of reward while they are in grave.
- 7- Inheritance is a mortgage. In such a case, the legator's debt must be paid first after redemption, and then the remaining money must be distributed among heirs.

A mortgagor is prohibited to procrastinate redemption to the dead mortgagee's heirs, because this procrastination makes it impossible to distribute inheritance, and such act falls within the general meaning of the Prophet's saying, "Delay in payment by a rich man is injustice."

- 8- When debt absorbs all property. The matter which makes it impossible to distribute inherited properties. Debt deprives heirs of inheritance as it must be given to the creditor, not the heirs.
- 9- Implementing the legator's will not to distribute inheritance and instead, letting all heirs to benefit from it.

The original ruling is to distribute inheritance to living heirs. This is their right that takes precedence over their legator's will not to distribute, because disrupting distribution would cause harm to heirs. Such wills are usually bequeathed by fathers

regarding their wives, fathers or mothers, especially the elderly, thinking that distributing property may lead to their alienation or homelessness. Sometimes legators bequeath companies that were a source of their livelihood during their lives. One may propose in a will that his heirs should not divide inheritance, and instead they benefit from the annual, monthly, weekly, or daily income of what he bequeathed. However, some heirs may insist on distribution and prefer independence, and this is a right *Sharī'ah* guaranteed to those who refuse. The researchers' view is: it is better to let the company, striving all together to develop it and becoming managing partners, and thus gaining profits according to their shares of inheritance.

- 10- Lack of official documents and judicial instruments proving the origin of ownership. Notaries and inheritance division experts usually ask for ownership documents, while a number of people to whom property was devolved in ancient times did not obtain documents or title deeds, and sufficed for an old custom that took place among members of his tribe, group, or relatives, and custom is considered in *Sharī ah*, or they relied on the testimony of a chieftain or mayor of the town. Someone may have a handwritten document that does not reach the level of official documents recognized by competent authorities. This, of course, makes it impossible to divide inheritance if it is real estate that has no documents or title deeds proving the origin of its ownership. The matter which forces heirs to strive through documentation offices or judiciary in order to extract ownership documents. Procedure in the above cases may take a long time and require financial expenses that all the heirs have to share in paying, or the share of the person unable to pay will be deducted from the value of his inheritance after the distribution.
- 11- Emergence of another disputer claiming ownership or partnership. This makes it impossible to distribute inheritance due to a lawsuit filed by the plaintiff, and a decision comes from a court to stop distributing until a judge considers evidence, arguments, and proofs in the possession of this plaintiff who appeared at the last moment.

This is a number of reasons that make it impossible to distribute inheritance, and it could be solved by one of four ways, which will be discussed in the following section.

Section three

Proposed solutions for inheritance property that cannot be divided

If it is not possible to divide inheritance, due to a problem in the inheritance itself or due to any other reason as abovementioned, one of the following solutions may be taken:

- Selling the inherited property, and thus heirs can benefit from the cash because it is easy to be distributed.
- Delaying distribution if the inherited properties are companies, shops, etc., and so if they are money. Heirs are permitted to leave their shares with someone who is trust, righteous honest, and expert in trade, so that he can develop it in a way similar to a partnership. The financial return in such a case is a right for all the heirs, each according to his share of the inheritance.
- Demolishing the inherited estate if it is a dilapidated property in order to distribute the original estate among the heirs, the matter which is in everyone's interest.
- Seeking the assistance of a division expert assigned by the judiciary to inspect the indivisible property. Accordingly, he can determine for each heir his apartment, room, or floor. If a discrepancy occurs between the areas, heirs have two solutions:
 - a) To demolish the walls separating rooms, hypothetically, and build new walls so that equality of space is achieved.
 - b) The owner of the largest area should financially compensate the one with a smaller area, and the surveyor contributes to achieving accuracy and justice between heirs.
 - c) It may be appropriate in the coming periods to expand the use of technology to support this field (Ahmed, Alharbi, & Elfeky, 2022; Elbyaly & Elfeky, 2023a, 2023c, 2023e, 2023f, 2023g, 2023h, 2023i; A. Elfeky, 2017; A. I. M. Elfeky & Elbyaly, 2016, 2019, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c, 2023e, 2023f, 2023g; A. I. M. Elfeky, Najmi, & Elbyaly, 2023, 2024a, 2024b; Elfekyand, 2016; Masada, 2017; Masadeh & Elfeky, 2016).

3. CONCLUSION

- The original rule of inherited property is that it must be materially divided among the heirs according to each one's share after the death of their legator. This original rule is valid unless practical material division of the same property becomes impossible in specific circumstances.
- Dividing inheritance quickly after the legator's death brings benefits and avoids harm for the heirs.
- Dividing inheritance quickly involves the receipt of reward for the deceased legator, while delaying division means

delaying this reward, and this is pure corruption.

- Any inheritance that cannot be materially divided -due to a problem in the property composition- after the death of the legator, division must be postponed until the heirs agree on what brings interest to all of them. For any inheritance whose distribution is delayed, the reason for the delay is not necessarily it is indivisible. Distribution may be postponed due to the absence of one of the heirs, or clearing the legator's debts and executing his wills first.
- Experience has shown that every inheritance that is quickly divided and thus each heir receives his share is a reason for maintaining bonds of kinship between heirs, unlike delaying the division, which leads to hostilities and disputes.
- There are many reasons for division impossibility, of which the research mentioned eleven, which are, in brief:
- 1- Decrease in the value of the inherited property if its structure is divided.
- 2- Lack of material division expert.
- 3- Disputes and hostilities between the heirs regarding obtaining a distinct part of the inheritance.
- 4- Extreme high prices.
- 5- Entanglement in those entitled to the inheritance.
- 6- Different types of estate.
- 7- If inheritance is a mortgage.
- 8- If debts absorb the estate.
- 9- The legator's will not to divide.
- 10- Lack of official documents proving the origin of ownership.
- 11- Emergence of a disputer claiming ownership or partnership.

If it is not possible to divide inheritance, due to a problem in the inheritance itself or due to any other reason as abovementioned, one of the following solutions may be taken:

- Selling the inherited estate, and thus the heirs can benefit from the cash.
- Delaying distribution if the inherited estate are companies, shops, etc.
- Demolishing the inherited estate if it is a dilapidated property in order to distribute the original estate among the heirs, the matter which is in everyone's interest.
- Seeking the assistance of a division expert assigned by the judiciary to inspect the indivisible property.

4. PROPOSALS

The research developed a set of important proposals that can be discussed in separate research, as follows:

- 1- Intransigence between litigants, its effects and rulings.
- 2- Depriving a woman of inheritance, its causes, conditions and rulings.
- 3- Delaying inheritance division: its causes, conditions, rulings, and regulations.
- 4- Inheritance between justice of *Sharī* 'ah and unfairness of Western laws, a comparative study.
- 5- Deception towards inheritance: A closer Islamic standpoint.
- 6- Litigation between heirs. Islamic rulings and etiquettes to be considered.
- 7- Experts of inherited property division and related rulings.
- 8- This research is a model of private individual fund econometrics.

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