Implementation Of Inheritance Distribution Among The Muslim Community In Berastagi District, Karo Regency

Sakban Lubis¹,Muhammad Yunan Harahap²,Rusli Halil Nst³

^{1,2}Universitas Pembangunan Panca Budi

³Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tebing Tinggi Deli

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*Correspondence Address:

sakbanlubis@dosen.pancabudi.ac.id yunan@dosen.pancabudi.ac.id ruslihalil3@gmail.com

Abstract: This study aims to examine the implementation of inheritance distribution within the Muslim community in Berastagi District, Karo Regency. The focus of the study is directed toward how inheritance practices are carried out, the extent to which the community understands the provisions of Islamic inheritance law, as well as the factors influencing its implementation. This research employs a qualitative method with a field study approach through interviews, observations. and documentation. research findings indicate that the practice of inheritance distribution among the Muslim community in Berastagi remains varied. Some community members have implemented faraidh provisions in accordance with Islamic law, yet there is still a tendency to use family deliberation, which emphasizes the principles of justice and mutual agreement. Factors influencing the implementation include the level of religious understanding, the influence of local customs, the role of religious leaders, and the socio-economic conditions of the heirs.

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INTRODUCTION

In community life, customary law is a living law that changes in line with the development of the times and serves as a legal framework. It is stated that customary law is also a social necessity that constantly grows and evolves, and may even differ from or be contrary to what previously existed. This is due to the dynamic nature of society, which continuously adapts to emerging circumstances (Sosnidar, 2021). All groups within customary communities adhere to the law that lives among them, and anyone who violates such law or customary practices will face moral consequences and legal implications imposed by the local customary authorities (Saima Yanti, 2019).

The family structure is influenced by customary law. Inheritance distribution is one aspect of kinship that is shaped by customary law. When a family member passes away and leaves an inheritance to the heirs, the inheritance is acquired. The issue of how

to manage and carry out the rights and obligations of the deceased constitutes one of the legal consequences that arise following a legal event (Munthe, 2021).

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The Batak Karo community predominantly resides in the Karo Regency area, where the local people still practice Karo traditions, as reflected in their inheritance patterns. The majority of the Batak Karo community strongly believe that passing on inheritance is beneficial for their way of life, maintaining peace within the clan, and ensuring the continuity of lineage."

The inheritance in question may consist of the estate left by a deceased heir, whether divisible or indivisible. Family customary property, marital property, and gifted property are all regarded as inheritance. In the Batak Karo community, inheritance can be distributed after both the owner of the estate and their spouse have passed away. This means that if an heir dies while leaving behind a wife, the inheritance can only be distributed to the heirs after the wife has passed away. In addition, inheritance may even be distributed while the heir is still alive, although this rarely occurs (Sitepu, 2018).

The patrilineal inheritance system in the Batak Karo community, which traces lineage through the father's line, is closely related to their kinship system. In other words, male descendants inherit the clan name from their father. Within the patrilineal kinship structure, daughters do not inherit their father's property because they are not considered heirs. It is well known that there is a unity of property within the patrilineal kinship system, which includes ancestral property, inherited property, livelihood assets, and joint marital property (gono-gini) managed by the husband. If a male child is adopted, he will join the clan of his adoptive parents, thereby severing his clan ties with his biological parents. Furthermore, an adopted son is allowed to inherit in the same way as a biological son. All sons of a father from the first, second, and subsequent marriages may inherit together if their father remarries (V.A. Sembiring, 2016).

Furthermore, individual inheritance is observed in the patrilineal culture, meaning that each heir is free to manage, enjoy, and control his share of the inheritance. Sons are entitled to inheritance in the Batak Karo inheritance system, while daughters and widows of heirs are not entitled to inherit; instead, they are only permitted to cultivate or use the land. Even if an heir has a wife and a daughter, the inheritance will pass to the heir's brothers if he has no sons. Sons hold greater inheritance rights than daughters because

daughters will eventually marry. When a daughter marries, she is considered to have left her father's clan and joined her husband's clan, marked by a 'honest' marriage (jujur), which represents mutual respect between both families, known as tukur (J.B. Barus, 2022).

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RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. This approach was chosen because the research seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of how inheritance distribution is practiced by the Muslim community in Berastagi District, Karo Regency, as well as to uncover the meanings they ascribe to Islamic law and the prevailing customary traditions.

Through this approach, the researcher can obtain a clear picture of the social, cultural, and religious dynamics underlying the process of inheritance distribution within the community. The research location was determined in Berastagi District, Karo Regency. The selection of this location was based on the presence of a Muslim community living side by side with the indigenous Karo people, thereby creating interactions between Islamic norms and local customary rules, particularly in matters of inheritance distribution.

The research data were obtained from two sources, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with religious leaders, traditional leaders, legal practitioners, and community members who had been directly involved in the inheritance distribution process. In addition, observations were also conducted to directly examine the mechanisms of inheritance distribution, both in family deliberation forums and through formal legal channels.

Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from relevant literature, such as books on Islamic inheritance law (fiqh al-mawaris), statutory regulations, religious court rulings, and previous studies. Data collection techniques included interviews, observations, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted to allow informants the freedom to explain their perspectives. Observations were carried out to capture field realities that might not emerge during interviews, while documentation was used to strengthen the data with written sources. The collected data were then analyzed

using the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The transfer of a deceased person's property to their heirs or rightful family members is regulated under inheritance law. There are three inheritance laws applicable in Indonesia: Islamic inheritance law, civil law, and customary law (A. Nasution, 2018). In legal practice, the distribution of inheritance is a common matter. Husbands and wives generally divide assets acquired through joint livelihood or inheritance after the deceased passes away. As is known, inheritance law regulates the distribution of the deceased's assets and the rights of the heirs (Amayani, 2024).

Inheritance, which in the terminology of fara'id is called tirkah (estate), refers to everything left behind by a deceased person, whether in the form of money or other assets permitted by Islamic law to be inherited by their heirs. In the common terminology used in Indonesia, inheritance is the transfer of various rights and obligations over a deceased person's wealth to other living individuals (Sakban Lubis, 2024). Because wealth and its distribution are among the most sensitive matters, the science of faraidh is regarded as one of the most noble branches of knowledge, requiring the highest level of precision, holding the loftiest position, and bringing the greatest reward. Due to its importance, Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala Himself determined the proportions and clarified the shares of inheritance for each heir, particularly in several explicit verses. (S. Thalib, 2022).

The majority of inheritance is owned by both men and women, whether large or small. However, in accordance with prevailing customs and cultural norms, women are not given the opportunity to express their ideas or speak freely. This is because Islamic law and customary law serve as the foundation for the formulation of laws and regulations in Indonesia, ensuring that the development of national law does not conflict with these two sources of law."

Islamic law has regulated the distribution of inheritance in the most proper, wise, and just manner. As a religious doctrine and system of belief, Islam establishes human ownership of property both for men and women through the principles of Sharia. It also determines the transfer of wealth owned by an individual during his or her lifetime to the

rightful heirs after death, whether male or female, without distinguishing between children and adults. The heirs entitled to receive a share of the inheritance according to Islamic law are those who have a hereditary relationship with the deceased, namely kinship based on lineage (nasab), marriage, slavery, and adherence to the same religion, Islam (Amin Husein Nasution, 2012).

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The law classifies heirs into four groups. The first group consists of legitimate children and their descendants, as well as the surviving spouse. The second group includes the father, mother, siblings, and their descendants. The third group comprises relatives in the collateral line, such as uncles, aunts, cousins, and the siblings of grandparents and their descendants up to the sixth degree. The fourth group consists of grandparents and relatives in the direct ascending line up to six generations (PNH Simanjuntak, 2017).

Article 1066 paragraph (2) of the Civil Code and Islamic inheritance law both affirm that heirs have the right to demand the transfer of inheritance to them at any time. This privilege, however, is not recognized in the distribution of inheritance under customary law. Conversely, if an heir holds rights to the inheritance under certain conditions or interests, he or she may pursue the utilization of the inherited property through deliberation and collective decision-making with the other heirs (Haniru, 2024).

Discussion Results

The Inheritance System of the Karo Indigenous Community

Before discussing the inheritance system in the Karo indigenous community, it is important to first present the position of children within Karo society, as perceptions of their status have implications for the entire customary inheritance system. In Karo customary society, the primary purpose of marriage is to continue the male lineage or clan (marga), since only sons are considered capable of preserving the clan line. Social phenomena, cultural values, and customary practices have legitimized the higher status of sons compared to daughters.

Because sons hold a highly important role in Karo families, it is often considered acceptable by both society and relatives for a marriage to end in divorce if the couple has no sons, as such a family is regarded as masap (extinct from its lineage). Nevertheless,

when a family does not have male offspring, various traditional beliefs are commonly practiced in the hope of obtaining a son. These efforts may include observing certain prohibitions, performing customary rituals, and even symbolic practices such as bathing with lime water.

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The presence of sons in Karo society is regarded as heirs of the clan (marga) and as individuals responsible for protecting their sisters. Even at a young age, a son is considered a connecting thread that strengthens kinship ties between his family, his father's brothers, and other relatives belonging to the same clan as his father. All sons hold an equal and parallel position to that of their father, sharing the same status as kalimbubu (wife-givers) to their father's sisters as well as to their own sisters.

However, this does not mean that daughters have no significance in Karo society. The position of daughters remains important, as it is through them that kinship ties are established in the role of anak beru (wife-takers). Based on this social phenomenon, the inheritance rules in Karo customary law exclude daughters from inheritance rights. Within the patrilineal kinship system (tracing lineage through the father's line), the Karo community adopts an individual inheritance system in which each heir is entitled to a portion of the estate. In practice, however, only sons are recognized as heirs and entitled to inherit the entirety of the family property. The main reason daughters are excluded from inheritance is that they cannot continue the paternal clan (marga).

Inheritance Distribution under Karo Customary Law

The family structure is influenced by customary law. The distribution of inheritance is one aspect of the kinship system shaped by customary law. When a family member passes away and leaves inheritance to the heirs, the inheritance is obtained. The matter of how to manage and exercise the rights and responsibilities of the deceased is one of the legal consequences that arise after the occurrence of a legal event. The majority of the Batak Karo community believes that inheritance is beneficial for life, peace, and the continuation of their clan lineage. The inheritance in question may consist of the property left by the deceased heir, which may or may not be divisible. Family customary property, marital property, and donated property are all regarded as inheritance. In Batak Karo society, inheritance is distributed among heirs after the husband's death. This means

that if an heir dies and leaves behind a wife, the inheritance can be distributed to the heirs after the wife has passed away. (Djaja S. Meliala, 1986). In the case of Batak Karo inheritance, patrilineal kinship is highly upheld, meaning that sons are entitled to inherit, while daughters and widowed heirs are only allowed to make use of or cultivate the land. Even if an heir has a wife and a daughter, the inheritance will pass to the heir's brothers if he does not have a son. (Djaja S. Meliala, 1986).

Sons have greater inheritance rights compared to daughters because daughters will eventually marry. When a daughter marries, she is considered to have left her father's clan and joined her husband's clan, marked by a "jujur" marriage, which represents mutual respect between both families. A man who marries a daughter does so by giving compensation to the woman, either in the form of money or other invaluable goods, which in the Karo language is called "tukur." (Djaja S. Meliala, 1986).

Inheritance Distribution in the Karo Muslim Community

1. Time and Method of Inheritance Distribution among the Karo Muslim Community in Berastagi District, Karo Regency

One of the topics that is often discussed, and even debated, concerns the timing of the distribution of inheritance. The question arises as to when the distribution of inheritance can be carried out. In Islamic law, there is a principle known as ijbari. This principle provides guidance that inheritance may be distributed once the parents (the decedent) have passed away. With the death of the decedent, their property automatically transfers to the heirs left behind. Regarding the timing, it largely depends on the heirs themselves. The sharia regulations do not impose any specific limitation concerning the timing. (Interview with BKM Mosque, 2024).

Ideally, after the decedent has passed away and all matters related to their person and property have been settled, the inheritance may in fact be distributed. However, since a Muslim is also part of a customary community, customary factors also influence the determination of the timing of inheritance distribution. Within customary society, it is considered taboo to distribute inheritance immediately after the decedent's death.

According to civil law, the transfer of inheritance rights is contingent upon both the intention of the decedent and the consent of the heirs entitled to receive such rights.

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In essence, inheritance does not pass automatically. The acceptance of inheritance by an heir is indispensable, as it entails the direct obligation to assume responsibility for the settlement of the decedent's debts. Consequently, the heirs' decision to either accept or reject the inheritance constitutes one of the principal factors that may delay the immediate distribution of the estate.

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According to Karo customary law, the distribution of inheritance is generally carried out only after both parents have passed away (Hilman Hadikusuma, 2023). Thus, the death of the father does not automatically mean that the property he leaves behind can be divided as inheritance among his children. The inheritance remains under the management of the surviving wife, who retains the right to administer and utilize her late husband's property as long as she does not remarry (Interview with BKM, 2025).

For the Karo community, a wife whose husband has passed away is regarded differently from one who is divorced during his lifetime; she is still considered part of her husband's family. This is essentially a consequence of the tukur institution (a woman who is "purchased") that exists in Karo society. Conversely, in the case of divorce during the husband's lifetime, the widow returns to her original family, and her customary relationship with her husband is considered terminated.

In Karo customary law, the death of one parent does not mean that the inheritance can be distributed. In the inner consciousness of the Karo people, father and mother are regarded as an inseparable unity unless the mother decides to remarry. In other words, divorce for the Karo community carries a different meaning from what is commonly understood in civil law or Islamic law. Ideally, inheritance will not be divided until both parents have passed away.

However, in certain cases, the distribution of inheritance may be carried out at the request of the heirs. This usually occurs when the heirs have married and are in urgent need of property. In such cases, the mother (the wife of the deceased) will divide the property with the approval of the kalimbubu and anak beru. In Karo customary law, what is referred to as inheritance is not limited to the property left by the deceased. In Islamic law, for instance, inheritance (tirkah) refers only to the estate once its owner has passed away. As long as the owner is still alive, the property cannot be considered inheritance. In contrast, in Karo customary law, the property of the parents, even while they are still

alive, is already regarded as inheritance. For this reason, gifts from parents to their children during their lifetime are counted as inheritance (Wirjono Prodjodikoro, 2008).

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It is clear that in Karo customary law, inheritance is usually distributed only after both parents have passed away. For the Karo people, it is considered taboo for children to demand inheritance while one of their parents is still alive—unless such a wish comes from the parents themselves. Naturally, this postponement of inheritance distribution gives rise to its own set of issues (Interview, 2025).

2. Analysis of Inheritance Distribution in the Karo Muslim Community

The method of inheritance distribution among the Karo people who are Muslim in Berastagi District, Karo Regency, seems to differ from the provisions of Karo customary inheritance law, in which specific shares or portions of property for each heir are not recognized. Almost all customary communities are unfamiliar with distributing inheritance through strict mathematical calculations. Thus, although customary inheritance law upholds the principle of equal rights, this does not necessarily mean that each heir will receive an identical share of the inheritance—whether in amount, value, or in accordance with predetermined portions.

In contrast to Islamic law, which recognizes fixed shares (furūd al-muqaddarah), Karo customary inheritance law does not extend inheritance rights as broadly as Islamic law does. As mentioned earlier, heirs in Karo customary law are limited to descendants, and even then, primarily to sons. It is not an exaggeration to say that the true heirs are the male children. Consequently, it becomes less important to determine specific portions, since when the heirs are male, they may take the entirety of the estate. Similarly, when all the heirs are female, it does not pose a significant problem (Interview with BKM Mosque, 2025).

In the Karo Muslim community, the distribution of inheritance is not based on fixed portions but rather on the type or form of property left behind. Generally, what is referred to as ancestral or inherited property pertains only to fields, rice paddies, fishponds, and houses. In the distribution process, what matters most is determining who receives what. Naturally, all parties must agree on their respective shares. One mechanism employed by the anak beru is to ask the surviving heirs directly, in order to

check whether any preliminary discussions among the heirs regarding the distribution have already taken place. If so, this would certainly ease the task of the anak beru, as they would merely need to reinforce the agreement already reached.

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In addition, the shares of each heir are not determined in a detailed, strict, or rigid manner. The distribution of portions appears to be carried out based on principles of fairness and propriety. The consent of the heirs is the key to ensuring that the decision made is correct. Thus, above all else, mutual agreement and understanding, combined with a willingness to compromise, are the factors that prevent conflict from arising.

Regarding the types of property distributed, sons usually receive land, rice fields, farms, and houses. Daughters, on the other hand, also receive property in the form of land or farms, but in smaller amounts. In addition, daughters may receive money or gold. Thus, in determining the shares or portions, Karo customary law does not recognize distribution based on strict numerical values as found in civil law or Islamic law. Customary law is based on the form and type of property. What is clear is that the distribution must reflect the values of balance and fairness. It is not surprising that, in certain cases, parents have predetermined each child's share through a will. Usually, markers (patok-patok) are used as symbols of boundaries. Other indicators, such as cardinal directions or special signs, may also be used to denote ownership by the children.

Based on the inheritance distribution model practiced by Muslim Karo communities and the Karo community in general, it appears that the most important aspect in the transfer of property is not its quantity. More important is how the heirs collectively share their parents' property, thereby fostering strong familial bonds and maintaining overall harmony. Therefore, differences in the size of each person's share—whether larger or smaller do not become a significant issue. In fact, in certain cases, each party may even compete to yield in favor of their siblings (Interview with BKM Mosque, 2025).

3. Methods of Inheritance Distribution to Heirs in the Karo Muslim Community in Berastagi District, Karo Regency

Inheritance involving different religions appears to be a significant issue in the life of the Muslim Karo community. One thing that must be understood is that, for the

Karo people, religion has not yet been fully established as a framework governing all aspects of their daily life. It is therefore understandable that Islamic teachings have not been entirely applied in their everyday practices. Until now, as explained by several informants, the practice of Islam is largely limited to 'ubudiyyah matters, such as purification (thaharah), prayer (salat), fasting (sawm), almsgiving (zakah), pilgrimage (hajj), and reading the Qur'an. In matters of inheritance, for example, Islamic law has not been fully implemented except in areas that, according to the community, do not conflict with customary law.

Generally, the Karo people are more afraid of being labeled as someone who does not follow customary law (la radat) than of being called someone without religion. It is therefore not surprising that many Karo families include members of different religions. It is a common sight in Karo families for some members to be Muslim, Christian, or even non-religious. What matters most is that harmonious relationships are maintained among family members. Interestingly, families with different religions can still live harmoniously as long as they all adhere to the provisions of Karo customary law.

The Karo community strictly adheres to customary law in relation to the distribution of inheritance to heirs of different religions. Among the Karo Muslims who have carried out inheritance distribution, they still allocate shares of the estate to siblings of a different faith. Clearly, having a different religion is not considered a barrier to inheriting property from their parents (Interview with BKM Mosque, 2025).

The Karo community states that differences in religion are not a reason for preventing someone from receiving inheritance. There are at least three main reasons commonly cited by Karo Muslims for still granting inheritance to individuals of a different faith (Community Interview, 2025).

First, the reason is shared lineage. The common ancestry is considered the strongest basis for the transfer of property from the decedent to the heirs. Second, the belief among Karo Muslims is that the property to be distributed is ancestral wealth that has existed since ancient times, long before their parents embraced Islam. Therefore, it is considered illogical by Karo Muslims that, due to differences in religion, this property should not be passed on to non-Muslim heirs. Third, the distribution of inheritance to heirs of different religions aims to prevent conflicts in the future. It is a deeply held

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understanding among the Karo people that the wealth of their grandfather will be passed down to his heirs.

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For the Karo community, religion and customary law occupy their own distinct domains. Religion, particularly Islam, is primarily observed in matters of worship, such as purification (thaharah), prayer (salat), fasting (sawm), almsgiving (zakah), and pilgrimage (hajj). Issues related to marriage and inheritance, however, are governed by the rules established by customary law. In Karo adat, matters such as marriage, inheritance, and death are strictly regulated with detailed provisions. Nevertheless, in certain cases, a small segment of the Muslim Karo community shows a tendency to prioritize Islamic law over customary law (Interview with BKM Mosque, 2025). There is a trend in the community to first adhere to Islamic law and then follow customary provisions. For instance, in death rituals, they first perform the funeral according to Islamic practices, followed by customary procedures. The same approach is observed in the distribution of inheritance.

His change becomes even more evident among Muslim Karo who have moved and now live in major cities. Although they still return to their villages in the Karo highlands and maintain connections with their relatives living in rural areas, they do not fully observe customary practices. At the very least, there are modifications, and to some extent, they implement more radical changes. As a result, conflicts—albeit on a small scale—sometimes arise between Muslim Karo living in urban areas and their relatives residing in the villages (Interview with BKM Mosque, 2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study on the Implementation of Inheritance Distribution among the Muslim Community in Berastagi District, Karo Regency, it can be concluded that inheritance practices in the community are still influenced by two legal systems: Islamic law and customary law. Some members of the community tend to follow the faraidh provisions as outlined in the Qur'an and Hadith, distributing inheritance proportionally according to the share of each heir. However, in practice, compromises are still found between the provisions of Sharia and considerations of customary law or family deliberations, particularly to maintain harmony and prevent conflicts.

The presence of religious and customary leaders plays an important role in the resolution process, serving both as mediators and legal advisors, so that the distribution of inheritance can be accepted by all parties. Nevertheless, the community's understanding of faraidh law still needs to be improved to ensure that the implementation of inheritance distribution truly aligns with the principles of justice established in Islamic Sharia.

Thus, inheritance distribution in Berastagi District reflects the dynamic interaction between Islamic law and local customary law. Efforts in education, socialization, and strengthening the role of religious institutions are highly necessary to ensure that the implementation of inheritance aligns more consistently with Islamic teachings, while simultaneously maintaining social harmony within the community.

In the Karo Muslim community of Gurusinga Village, Berastagi District, Karo Regency, customary law and consensus-based deliberation (musyawarah hasil mufakat) led by the Tangkep Telu are still used to resolve inheritance distribution. However, in recent decades, a new awareness has emerged among Karo Muslims to pay greater attention to daughters or female relatives. Inheritance distribution has begun to shift and is no longer strictly based on customary law. The Karo Muslim community believes that changes are necessary to keep up with the times and to better recognize the rights of women. Consequently, in the inheritance distribution process, emphasis is placed on deliberation with kalimbubu and anak beru, so that both daughters and sons have inheritance rights. Although in some cases the shares for daughters may not equal those of sons, the rights of women today are given much greater consideration.

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