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use for our purposes limited. Second, I do not find it universal and instead find the term world stewardship more effective and a clear example of the local/global paradox.” Historically, in Rajaei’s view, as long as the three pillars of the law of the world stewardship’s logic — “expediency,” “government/territory,” and “governance and reflection” — were clear, despite its ups and downs, the leadership was able to carry through periods of development, world stewardship, civility, and civilization, sometimes even setting the rules of the game. Historically, Rajaei sees two golden ages — the Achaemenid civilization of ancient Iran and the Safavid era in the Islamic period — as special periods when the law of the world stewardship’s logic and its foundations were firmly established in Iran. In other words, Rajaei believes that as long as the three pillars were solid and their expediency, territory, and governance were clear, the “Iran-shahrian” government/territory could ride out the four aforementioned development phases, corresponding with four different dynasties — the Medes, Achaemenids, Parthians, and Sassanids — leaving behind civility and civilization. During these eras, because it was developing and stewarding the world, it was also a player and often called the shots in many cases. The government’s expediency was defined within the Zoroastrian worldview brought by the Iranian people, and the king, endowed with divine glory (“farr-e izadi”), symbolized government/territory

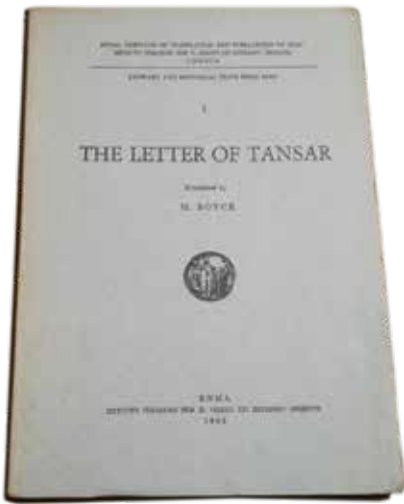
sovereignty and, in Rajaei’s view, the political. Regarding the political, the monarchy was established, with the prime minister as its symbol; On other areas, priests embodied religion and culture, for example, while prominent families represented the societal, among others. Subsequently, after Islam was declared the dominant worldview and religion in Iran, the Iranshahrian government/territory gradually faded away, and a new order took hold in Iran’s geographic domain. Nonetheless, despite its own ups and downs, the caliphate government remained the defining and decisive government/territory until the rise of the Safavids. Its expediency was framed within the Islamic/Arab cultural worldview brought by the Arabs, with the caliph symbolizing government/territory sovereignty and, again per Rajaei, the political. The political system of the caliphate was established by drawing on a mix of Roman and Iranian monarchy systems, with the sultan/emir symbolizing monarch/state and the political. Finally, during Iran’s last development period — the Safavid monarchy — the Iranian government/territory re-emerged, reestablishing royal rule with the king as symbol, endowed with “the shadow of God” (instead of the ancient Iranian divine light). The prime minister was installed as the monarch/state symbol and the political, but elsewhere, for example, Sheikh al-Islam symbolized religion and culture, and Mulla Sadra represented science and arts, among others. According to Rajaei, it was this developmental and world-stewarding quality that established the Iranian government/territory at the national level, with Armenian and Jewish minorities in its capital among the most successful and wealthy. Globally, Iran was the second major player after the Ottomans.

However, Rajaei believes that since the Safavid collapse, things have taken a turn, and this situation continues to this day. Looking back at the Afsharid, Zand, Qajar, and Pahlavi periods, the lack of function in the “expediency, territory, and governance” framework — and consequently the government/territory — is striking. Rajaei contends that Mohammad Mosaddegh understood this divide and repeatedly urged the two Pahlavi kings to keep ruling. Even as prime minister, when asked to crack down on newspapers attacking him, he refused. What he could not stand was attacks on the state, which he saw as the identity symbol of Iranians and Muslims, and he declared this officially. In other words, during these four periods, our political unit lacked clarity or serious recognition. Thus, instead of collective acting, the rule was “everyone with me”. The Politics dominated the political, and the monarch/state viewed itself as the government/territory so fully that it laid hands on other areas of the political — meaning economy, society, science, religion, and culture — suffocating and weakening them. Within this historical trend, Rajaei asks: Following Iran’s Islamic Revolution and its slogans, has the Islamic Republic defined its government/territory and — within the political — its expediency in the framework of the Shia worldview and revolutionary slogans? Has it, within the discussed intellectual framework, reflected on the decorum and etiquette of affairs, turning the law of the world stewardship’s logic into the “rules of the game”? Are the government/territory and the political symbols established and recognized? Are the three branches of the republic symbols of the political, each properly separate but balanced? Do other symbols — economy, society,

science and arts, religion and culture — each play their proper roles, enabling sustainable development and, as Rajaei puts it, world stewardship and acting on the global stage? Rajaei replies that every Iranian must understand that since the Islamic Revolution, there has been challenges like the imposed war, relentless and suffocating sanctions, encirclement of the homeland — from Russia in the north, the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council and allies in the south, extremist religious forces in Pakistan and Afghanistan to the east, and the war and its extension (meaning extremist Arab forces) in the west — plus third-party sanctions tightening international operational space, and short-sighted, selfish domestic interests inside Iran. I personally do not know if, given these challenges, anyone has even had the chance or spirit to look back at a millennium-old and historic perspective. But I always believe in future generations and hope they will rise up to not only revive but also provide a modern narrative for the three pillars of the law of the world stewardship’s logic — “expediency, government, and governance and reflection” — for themselves and Iran, so that god forbid, world-burning destruction does not catch up with us.

Conclusion

Rajaei’s historical perspective shows that since the Safavid era, the law of the world stewardship’s logic has been on vacation, and he identifies the root cause of this suspension as the confusion between “the political” and “the Politics,” and their external institutions, which in today’s political discourse are symbolized, respectively, by the government and state. Today, such confusion is called “securitization” of issues, where in the name of security, debate, transparency, dialogue, and accountability are shut down. The result of this confusion in the Sassanid period was the final defeat and collapse of government sovereignty. In the Safavid case, it brought a second defeat due to Afghan invasions and ongoing collapse, which persists to this day. Thus, in Rajaei’s thinking, modern development occurs only when the three pillars — expediency, government/territory, and governance and reflection — pull together in balanced harmony. But when the political and the Politics get mixed up, and worse, the Politics dominate, the first victim is the political since elements like territory, expediency, and governance are ignored or disappear entirely. This confusion inflicts heavy damage, such as: The end justifies the means; kings consider themselves owners of the territory; the rule “everyone with me” prevails; and world stewardship is replaced by global subjugation. The climax is when the political (with all its values) becomes a tool for the Politics. A clear sign is society’s politicization and cult of personality, whether in Trump’s America, Putin’s Russia, Kim Jong Un’s North Korea, Mohammed bin Salman’s Saudi Arabia, or Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Turkey!

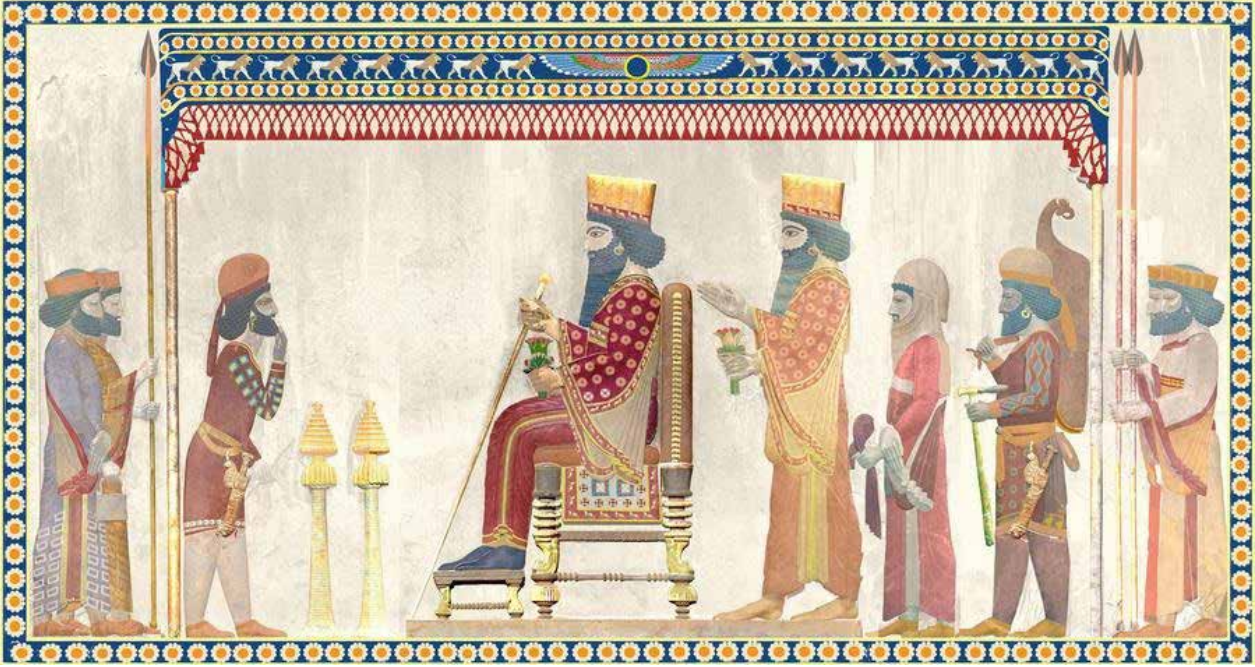


⬆ The letter of Tansar, translated by M. Boyce and published by Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Torino, 1968 ● [ahebooks.co.uk](#)



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⬇ The painting shows Darius the King, the third King of Kings of the Achaemenid Empire, ruling the empire from his throne. ● X



⬅ Safavid school, Iran, 19/20th century, oil and ink on canvas: ‘A ceremonial court view’ ● [rm-auctions.com](#)