



The Political Thought of Darius the Great (522- 486 B.C.), the Legislator of Achaemenid Empire (A Study Based on Achaemenid Inscriptions in Old Persian)

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Abstract: Darius offered the political order of “king of kings” to solve the political crisis of his era. He legitimized it based on an order of gods. In his belief, the nature of politics was based on a dualistic religious worldview that is the fight between true divinity and false divinity’s will and performance in the world. In addition, the chief true divinity’s law was introduced as the principle order in the world and eternal happiness in true divinity’s house. Therefore, it was considered as the pattern of political order following which was propagandized as the way to reach happiness in this world and salvation in next life. To protect this law, the chief true divinity bestowed the political power to the ruler. Therefore, what should be the political order and who should be the ruler, is justified in the context of the definitions of human, world, happiness and salvation. The sovereignty of the ruler and, therefore, the domination of the chief true divinity’s laws in politics were considered as justice. This definition of justice denied liberty and promoted absolutism. In justifying the ruler’s absolute power, even his laws and commands were considered as the dominant norms over the politics. The principal motif for the Achaemenid ruler to consider him the gods’ attributes originates from the historical competitions between warriors and priests. The Achaemenid ruler was belonged to the group of warriors. Since the historical trend of achieving the political ruling by the Aryan warriors was based on force and power, they could not legitimize their ruling without considering people’s religious worldview. The Aryan priests claimed that they had the ability to communicate with gods and observe the rules created by the legislator god. Therefore, the Achaemenid king-warriors tried to enhance their spiritual status by calling themselves as selected persons and gods’ representatives on earth. Therefore, they considered gods’ attributes, such as wisdom, legislation and absolute power for themselves. However, due to the Achaemenid ruler’s worldview and the divine right of ruling, this claim had no influence in changing the nature of politics from a sacred basis to a secular one.

Keywords: Darius the Great, Political Crisis, Political Order, Political Legitimacy, Divine right of Ruling, Divine law, Human law

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Introduction

Political thought is a set of ideas about how to order the political aspects of human life. These thoughts propose a political order to solve political crises based on their definition of the world, human being, justice, and happiness. In this political order, in addition to the proposition of a desirable social and political structure, the nature, scope, and legitimacy of ruling are determined. This political order also answers the questions of who (which person or group) has the right to political authority and why.

As far as the theoretical research of politics is concerned, it can be claimed that, throughout the history, no political system has been formed without the need to resort to political thoughts. It is while; the study of Ancient political thought has been limited to Greece. However, the existence of magnificent political systems in Ancient Near East (such as Mesopotamian, Elamite and Achaemenid Empires) could not be established without political thought. In this study, the political thought of Darius the Great has been explained based on the survived texts from his ruling epoch. The results of this study can be helpful in the investigation of the roots of political thoughts and theories of the history of ancient political thoughts. Moreover, due to the intercultural nature of the ideas, the results can have significant contribution to the study of the process of formation, influence on and from, and the evolution of political thoughts in Iran, Islam, and the West, especially in the ancient and medieval times.

Many texts related to this era have been founded in various languages and different subjects. Among these, significant for the explanation of Darius' political thought are thousands of official documents in Elamite,

known as Fortification Tablets of Persepolis, and particularly Darius' inscriptions in Old Persian (see: Hallock,1977;Koch,2000: 35-83; Brosius, 2009: 192-224; Kuhrt, 2007; Kent,1953).These inscriptions are called DB (Darius, Behistan), DP (Darius, Persepolis), DNa, b(Darius,Naqš-iRustam), DS (Darius,Susa) , DZa,b,c (Darius,Suez), DE(Darius, Elvand) and DH (Darius,Hamadan).Having propagandized the ideology of Darius' Empire, these inscriptions, especially DB are the most important sources to this paper .

Here, these inscriptions have not been investigated to describe the political history of Achaemenid Empire; rather, they have been interpreted to answer the questions regarding political thought. To this end, after describing the political crisis of that epoch, we have tried to investigate the following topics: in order to solve the political crisis, which political order has been proposed? In this political order, which group has had the right to political authority? How the ruling and subordination legitimacy has been defined? Based on which principles and norms the people have integrated into that political order. Here, Darius the Great's beliefs about the world, time, human being, gods, death, happiness, justice, and liberty have been discussed in relation to the right to ruling and, in particular, the nature of politics and the nature of political order.

Concerning Darius' status as the legislator and the founder of the largest empire the world had seen, studying his political thought could be helpful for the theories of the history of ancient political thoughts. Moreover, due to the intercultural nature of the ideas, the results of this study can have significant contribution to the study of the process of formation, influence on and from, and the evolution of political thought

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Political Crisis

Based on Behistan inscription, it can be inferred that there was a political crisis at the beginning of Darius the Great's ruling; that is, after Bardiya's murder (522 B.C.), the lands, which had been taken under the authority of Cyrus the Great (530-559 B.C.) and Cambyses II (522-530 A. C.), started to claim their previous political independence. The main rebellions erupted in Ūvjaiy<Elam>, Bābiruš<Babylon>, Pārsa<Persian>, Māda<Media>, Aθurā<Assyria>, Mudrāya<Egyptian>, Parθava<Parthian>, Marguš<Margiana>, θatguš<Sattagydia>, and Saka<Scythian>. Many of these lands, including Ūvjaiy<Elam>, Aθurā<Assyria>, Bābiruš<Babylon> and Mudrāya<Egyptian>, already had a long history of magnificent political systems. In fact, the long history of very political systems in many of these lands was not comparable with that of the short period of Cyrus the Great and Cambyses II ruling. As a result, according to Behistan inscription, a large number of rebellion leaders named themselves after their past mighty kings e.g.

Nabukudračara<Nebuchadnezzar> for Babylonians, Imanish and Atamaita[Atahamiti-Inshushinak] for Elamites and even Cyaxares for Medians in order to regain their previous political independence (See DB I.73-82; DB II.5-64; DBII. 70-98; DBIII. 1-92; DBIV.3-10; DBV.1-14 (DBV.20-30).

Using his courage and warrior tact during a 3-year period, Darius the Great was able to thwart all the independence seeking attempts in 21 wars; however, after all these years of war, he came to the understanding that "the spear of a Persian man" (DNa.43-44) was temporarily able to keep these lands calm – the lands that had an old history in wars and a more famous history in politics. During these

stressful years, Darius the Great and his ambitious disciples were preoccupied with a question or an idealistic vision: in the political history of ancient Near East, how was it possible to establish a durable political integration under the authority of a great king through creating a universal empire from the northern Africa to the central Asia which would lead?

Ruling and the Political Order

Based on what Darius the Great has mentioned in many of the inscriptions, one can understand his political strategy for solving the problems related to independence seeking movements and political fragmentation in the ancient Near East:

"...I am Darius the Great King, King of Kings, King of lands¹ containing all kinds of men, King in this great earth far and wide, son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenian, a Persian, son of a Persian, an Aryan, having Aryan lineage..."(DNa.8-15).

Darius the Great has called himself "xšāyaθiya vazarka". The term of "Xšāyaθiya <king>" means a person who has the right to political authority. As Darius has mentioned in Behistan inscription, the leaders of rebellions believed that they are xšāyaθiya<king> as well. For example, while relating the first rebellion, it has been said that a person named Āčina the son of Upadarmarises from the land of Ūvjaiy<Elam> announced to the people: "adam Ūvjaiy xšāyaθiya amiy" <I am king in Elam>. After that,

in Elam, disobedient Elamites gathered around Āčina and crowned him as xšāyaθiya<king> (DB I.75-77). According to Behistan inscription, each of these insurgents claimed that they are xšāyaθiya<king> in their land. In order to unify these lands, Darius the Great did not restrict himself to the title of the "king" of Persia; instead, he chose a superior title as "xšāyaθiya vazarka", which means

<the Great King> who rules all the lands, “xšāyaθiya dahyūvnām”. In a part of Naqš-i Rostam inscription, the lands ruled by Darius the Great are described as:

“...these are the lands which I seized outside of Persia...: Media, Elam, Parthia, Aria, Bactria, Sogdiana, Charisma, Drangiana, Arachosia, Sattagydia, Gandara, Sind, Amyrgian, Schythians, Schythians with pointed caps, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, Armenia, Cappadocia, Sardis, Ionia, Scythians who are across the sea, Skudra, Petasos-wearing Ionians, Libyans, Ethiopians, men of Maka and Carians.. (DNa.15...22-30)”

Therefore, it might be stated that Darius the Great founded the political order of “xšāyaθiya xšāyaθiyānām<The King of Kings>” in order to deal with the political fragmentation of these distant xšāyaθiyas <kings>and dahyus<lands>, lands that were populated by people with different types of cultural and political histories. In this political order, at the top of each of these lands there was a ruler called xšaçaṭpāvan<governors> , which means a person who protects the empire and the city. Darius the Great used the term manā bandaka<my subjects>as the title for these lands and governors:

“Saith Darius the King: These are the lands which came unto me... they were “my subjects”...what was said unto them by me, either by night or by day that was done.” (DBI.17-20)

The Great King directly appointed these governors. In addition, like the Great King, some of these rulers had a Persian lineage .

Another point that is important to know in order to better understand this political order is finding out about the social origin of the great king and his governors. They were belonged to the group of warriors based on the Achaemenid reliefs and documents; that is, they were in fact the war commanders. For

example, considering Darius the Great, we know that before coming to the throne, he was a member of the groups of warriors in the Aryan tribe of Persia. He also used to be a lancer and one of the commanders of the army of Cambyses II (522-529 B. C.) in the conquest of Egypt (Herodotus, 3.139 see How & Wells, 1961).

As a result, one can state that, compared to the political system in previous empires of ancient Near East, Darius the Great’s and his successors’ had three main features:

1. In Darius the Great’s Empire, The title dahyus<land> has been changed to province or state in today’s terminology.

2. The title of the top political figure of these provinces, changed from the title xšāyaθiya<king>to xšaçaṭpāvan<governors>, which means a person who protects the province and the power of the Great King and was his governor indeed.

3. Based on the researchers’ viewpoint the empire of Cyrus the great and Cambyses II was administered by a loose federation of autonomous provinces whose officials were non-Persian (see: Lehmann-Haupt, 1921: cols.82-188; Ehtéçham, 1946: 110-127; Petit, 1990:16-97; Dandamaev, 1975:71-78; Dandamaev, 1992; Bivar, 1985: 610-621; Meyer, 1944 : 46-47; How & Wells, *ibid*: 3.89; 3.120-29; 4.165-67). This matter resulted in chaos and rebellion and led to the destruction of their empire in 522 B.C.E (Schaeder, 1941:32; Junge, 1944: 41-43 and 51; Stolper, 1985: 6). However after suppressed the rebellions, Darius the great integrated the provinces in to a mighty empire whose governors were Persian. “The Great King” among Persians, especially the royal house or of the six great noble families (Meyer, 1944: 47ff.; Schaeder, 1941: 18; Petit, 1990: 219-226; Cameron, 1973; Plato, 1926:

III. 695c-e) usually directly appointed these governors. So, one can suggest that this new structure was Darius' innovation.

Based on researchers' investigations, in order to supervise the performance of these governors, The Great King always sent a commission of trusted men who were known as "eyes" and "ears" of the great king to the provinces of the empire. Furthermore, in order to avoid giving absolute power to governors in these lands, some other authorities, such as treasurer, commander of the garrison, and The Great King's representative, were also appointed by The Great King. They gave some reports to the Great King, which was independent from that of the governors (Meyer: *ibid*, 39-89; Schaefer, 1934; Frye, 1984: 106-126). However, after the Great King, the most senior official, whose status was even higher than that of governors, was the Great King's minister. He was the head of an extensive administrative apparatus who commanded all economic and political official of the empire, hence the treasury tablets were written under the supervision of him also he oversaw the correspondence, most of which bears subscriptions naming the scribes. In order to be able to fulfill his duties, the great minister had an assistant and a large number of secretaries. In the era of Darius the Great, a person named Farnaka for a long time (Koch, 2000: 42-54, 109) occupied this status.

As it is observed, in the empire of Darius the great there is no trace of the Aryan's ancient political and social units such as *vərəzāna* <clan> and *airyamanor Zantu* <tribe> (Yasna32.1; Yasna33.3; Yasna46.1; Yasna49.7; Farwardin Yasht. 21,150 and 151; Mihr Yasht.17 and 18, and see: Geldner, 1896; Humbach & Ichaporia, 1994). This should not be considered as an indication of the elimination of the role of tribal life in the Achaemenid political and social structure. It should be noted that Darius the Great himself rose from an

Aryan tribe. Darius the Great has mentioned his clan as *viθ-*. This term has been also used for the royal court (e.g. DPh.10, DPe.24, DNa.53, DSe51, Also see Kent, 1953: 208). The important point here is that no longer the political decision making process was based on the internal functions of tribal system and nomadic life. Instead, it relied on the internal functions of a civil system within a great empire. In this period, tribes lived around the important cities of the empire, while at the same time retained their ancient structural functions. It can be inferred from Behistan inscription that the title used for the head of these tribes was *maθišta*, meaning the chief or the greatest one (e.g. DBV. 20-30). Although these chiefs were somewhat independent, they worked in cooperation with governors and under the political decisions of The Great King. These tribes constituted a significant proportion of The Great King's army for defending the empire borders and taking part in his invasions.

The establishment of the political order of Achaemenid Empire depended on the presence of an authoritarian king like Darius the Great; however, he knew that if he wanted this system to persevere even after his death, he should lay its foundations based on a codified doctrine. What can be inferred from Dairus the Great's inscriptions is that, like the principles of the political order of Achaemenid Empire, this doctrine was based on two important principles:

1.An Orderly and Efficient Bureaucratic System

In his inscriptions, to name the empire's bureaucratic system, Darius the Great has used the title "*manā dātā*" which means "my laws" (e.g. DB I.23; DNa.21; DSe.20) and [*manā*] *framānā* which means "[my] command" (e.g. DNb.28, 37. Kent, *ibid*: 198). Darius the Great believed that the order and unity of vast lands was the result of his laws and command:

“Saith Darius the King: ... these are the lands which I seized outside of Persia. I ruled (patiyaxšayaiy) over them; they bore tribute to me; what was said to them by me, that they did; my law- that held them firm”. (DNa.15-22; DSe.14-21)

On the other hand, as he has mentioned, Darius’ *dātā*<laws> had put an end to the historical strife among these lands:

“Saith Darius the King: Provinces were in commotion; one man was smiting the other. The following I brought about...that the one does not smite the other at all, ...My law- of that they feel fear, so that the stronger (tauvīyah-) does not smite nor destroy the weak (Skauθi-)”. (DSe.31-41)

Now, after observing the relief of Darius the Great’s tomb in Naqš-i Rostam – where different people of the empire are carrying the Great King’s throne on their shoulders – or the relief of Apadāna palace in Persepolis – where in a friendly atmosphere the representatives of different lands of the empire are holding the hands of the Great King’s representative and are carrying gifts for the Great King who is sitting on the empire throne while holding lilies – one comes to the conclusion that, for the first time in the history of ancient politics, Darius the Great was able to unify these lands which had already been engaged in long and frequent wars. This state of unification was based on the laws of a single Great King (See DSf.25-55) .

Although in the inscriptions of Darius the Great the details of these laws and the orderly and efficient bureaucratic system have not been mentioned, their descriptions can be extracted from thousands of Fortification Tablets of Persepolis. As mentioned by Koch, since they are the documents of imperial secretariat to accurately record the situation of empire, these Fortification Tablets

constitute the most precious way for enlightening us with regard to the realities of Darius the Great’s empire(Koch,ibid:340). According to researchers’ investigation, these tablets give us valuable information in various domains including monthly payments and rewards of top rank officials such as the king’s wife, minister, governors, treasurer, secretaries, assistants, staff, workers in different branches, women, children, etc. They also provide information on the enter and exit of passengers to lands and passport issuance, accurate accounts of the storage system and methods of filing the empire documents, army, everyday life, and religious affairs. As a result, these tablets also make us familiar with the empire’s orderly official and political rules, social labor division and developed social justice. This efficient bureaucratic system of Darius the great lasted for nearly two centuries and influenced the organization of

subsequent states like Seleucid and Roman empires(see: Junge,1944: 150 and 198n.46; Kornemann, 1940:398 ff., 424 ff.). Then Koch has concluded:

“In final words, today’s western bureaucratic system has originated from and influenced by the Achaemenid governing system”. (Koch, ibid: 347).

With regard to the way, these rules were approved in the Achaemenid Empire, Koch writes:

“First, they got familiar with the rules, customs, tastes, and sensitivities of the people of the lands under their ruling. Sometimes, they modified them and then imparted them to their original land as ‘the king’s laws’. In these modifications, ethnic features of each of the lands were always taken into consideration. Therefore, king’s laws were differed from one land to

another” (Koch: *ibid*, 347).

It can be inferred from the inscriptions that, for exercising and developing these *laws* and *commands*, the *Great King appropriately blessed the agriya – people who were loyal to the Great king’s laws* –. In contrast, *arika*-<faithless> was severely punished by the Great King (e.g. DB I.21-24). Therefore, one can conclude that the Great King was not only the top rank political decision maker and legislator, but also the most important judicial figure.

2.The Introduction of Dairus the Great’s Characteristics as the Example of an “Ideal ruler”

In *Naqš-i Rostam* inscription (DNb), which can be considered a unique text in terms of expressing the features of an “ideal ruler”, Darius the Great numerates “warrior”, “justice”, “restraint”, and “wisdom” as his four *h^uvnara*- < accomplishment> as a great king. In the third and fourth lines of this inscription, he has mentioned his *xraou*-<wisdom> and *aruvasta*-< activity>. In DNb.34, Darius the great says, “I am a good battle fighter”. In addition, in DNb. 40, he says, “as a bowman I am a good bowman both afoot and on horseback”. In addition, in the next lines, by saying *Rustam dauštā a^hmiy*<I am a friend to righteousness>, he has referred to his justice in dealing with able and unable individuals (DNb.7). In another paragraph, where stating *naiy manauviš a^hmiy* <I am not hot-tempered>, he has emphasized his restraint in the time of anger (DNb.13, 14). By emphasizing *uvaipašiyahyā daršam xšayamna a^hmiy*,<I am firmly ruling over my own (impulses)>, he has indicated his justice in rewarding obedient individuals and punishing disobedient ones. He has also demonstrated his inclination to listen to the two parties in a struggle and then make his judgment (DNb.15-26). It seems that these four virtue

are the four steps of training which Socrates [or Plato] has discussed in *Alcibiades I* as the steps of Achaemenid kings’ training (Plato, 1924a:AlcibiadesI. 121e-122 a). These are the same features which Xenophon in the book *Cyropaedia* has ascribed to Cyrus as a desirable ruler (Xenophon, 1989). One can also assume that these propagandas about features of an ideal ruler had influence on philosopher kings in Plato’s *Republic* (2013).

Ruling legitimacy

What type of political legitimacy was propagated to justify the obedience to Dairus the Great?

In different inscriptions, Darius the Great has explained the reason for his right to rule the people. This ideology has also been repeatedly mentioned by his successors. Darius the Great believed that *Ahuramazda’s vašna*-<will>, *upastā*-<aid > and *kāma*- <desire >made him the king and Ahuramazda (the chief of true deities, means Wise Lord) bestowed that ruling to him:

“Saith Darius the King: by the will of *Ahuramazda’s* I became *xšāyaθiya*<king>; *Ahuramazda’s* bestowed <*frābarat*> the kingdom upon me.” (DBI.11-12). “By the will of *Ahuramazda’s* I hold this kingdom”. (DBI.25-26)

Also, he subscribed to the idea that it was *Ahuramazda’s* will to overcome the rebels who claimed to be the kings of their lands, reward the politically obedient people, and severely punish the politically disobedient ones (DBI.13-14, 67-68, 87-88, 94-95, DBII.3-4, 34-36, 86-88). For example, with regard to the actions that he took in the first year of his ruling, Darius the Great says:

“Saith Darius the King: this is what I did by the will of *Ahuramazda’s* in one and the same year after that I became king. XIX battles I fought; the will of *Ahuramazda’s* I smote them

and took prisoner IX kings". (DBIV. 3-7)

Furthermore, according to Darius the Great, Ahuramazda has bestowed the lands to him:

"Saith Darius the King: this is the kingdom which I hold, from the Scythians who are beyond Sogdiana, thence unto Ethiopia; from Sind, thence unto Sardis – which Ahuramazda's the greatest of the gods bestowed upon me..." (DPh.3-8)

Advocating Ahuramazda's desire, aid, and will was also important for other kings who came to power as the successors of Darius the Great. In other words, these kings believed that it was Ahuramazda's desire to select them. In order to explain why Darius the Great selected him rather than his brothers as his successor, Xerxes I (465-486 B.C.) claimed that it was the desire of Ahuramazda's:

"Saith Xerxes the King: other sons of Darius there were, (but) – thus unto Ahuramazda's was the desire – Darius my father made me the greatest after himself. When my father Darius went away from the throne, by the will of Ahuramazda's I became king on my father's throne..." (XPf.27-36)

As a result, it can be stated that the political legitimacy of Achaemenid kingship was "divine-right theory of kingship".

For the great king, the discussions related to the Divine right to rule reached its peak when he attempted to prove a divine intention in his own creation by connecting the subject of politics with the subject of creation. Based on this ideology, Achaemenid ruler was in fact a "selected person" and a "the savior" who was created by Ahuramazda's. Ruling was bestowed to such a person to renovate "the earth in commotion":

"Great Ahuramazda's... he created <adadāt> Darius the King, he bestowed on him the kingdom; by the will of Ahuramazda's Darius is King."(DPd.1-5).

"Saith Darius the King: Ahuramazda's, when he saw this earth in commotion, thereafter bestowed it upon me, made me king ..." (DNa.30-34). "Unto Ahuramazda's thus was the desire: he chose <avarnavatā> me as (his) man in all the earth; he made me king in all the earth". (DSf.15-18)

This explanation for the origin of the great king's rise to power indicates that every attempt to depose him was considered illegitimate since it was supposed to be against God's will and desire.

From the viewpoint of political thought, the important question is how people were convinced to accept the political legitimacy of the great king. The investigation of Darius the great's inscriptions indicates that his legitimacy was justified in the light of religious beliefs about existence, universe, human being, and the way happiness is achieved.

In Darius the great's belief, the existence is the arena for the fight between arta- and drauga- (DBI.33-35; DBIV.33-36 and see XPh. 40-41, 50-51, 53-54). Arta- means truthfulness, good law, cosmic order, and justice, whereas drauga- means lie, bad law, chaos, and injustice. In addition, based on his worldview the universe is the arena of baga's <true divinity> and daiva's <demon or false divinity> will and performance. While bagas try to bring order to the world and make it a better place based on arta-; daivas try to bring chaos and destruction to the world based on drauga-. As it can be understood from Achaemenid inscriptions, Ahuramazda's, which means "wise lord", is bagavazarka, signifying the chief of true divinity and the creator of arta- (DNa. 1, DSp. 1 and see DBIV.61-62).

How is this religious worldview combined with politics?

According to the great king's belief, *arta* is the basis of both order in the world and eternal happiness in the true divinity's house. As a result, in order to overcome political and social crises and achieve a desirable society, human being should follow the example of true divinity's house by making moral and political aspects of *arta*-dominate the dos and don'ts of his individual, social, and political life. At the same time, he should avoid moral and political aspects of *drauga*-.

In the inscriptions of Darius the great, titles such as *rāsta*- <righteousness> and *arštā*- <righteous-based performance> have been mentioned as the moral and political aspects of *arta*-. These attributes are in fact *framānā*- <command> and *dāta*-<law> of Ahuramazda's . In contrast, moral and political aspects of *drauga* have been introduced by titles such as *drujana*- , which means lying and the performance which is based on *miθa*- <untruthful and bad performance> .

According to an inscription of Xerxes I, one can consider that Darius the great had also believed that Ahuramazda's "command" and "law" dominating individual, political, and social norms are not the only way of achieving happiness in this material world, but also following them can make human beings eternally blessed even afterlife:

"... if thou shalt think, "Happy" may I be when living, and when dead may I be "blessed" , have respect for that law <*dāta*-> which Ahuramazda's has established ; worship Ahuramazda's and artareverent(ly). The man who has respect for that law <*dāta*-> which Ahuramazda's has established, and worships Ahuramazda's and *arta* reverent(ly), he both becomes happy while living, and becomes blessed when dead." (XPh.46-56)

Based on these justifications, since Darius the great was the selected representative and friend of Ahuramazda's, subordination to his commands was synonymous with following

arta, which was advocated as leading to happiness in this material world and blessedness in afterlife. On the contrary, disobeying the great king or rebelling against him was supposed to be subordination to *drauga*, which was considered the cause of unhappiness in this material world and lack of afterlife blessedness. The rebels who followed *drauga* and claimed *xšāyaθiya* were supposed to deceive people and take the lands and their people away from "arta":

"Saith Darius the King: there are the provinces which became rebellious. The *drauga* made them rebellious, so that these (men) deceived the people (DBIV. 33-36). After that, people became evil <*arika*>. After that the *drauga* waxed great in the land, both in Persia and in Media and in the other provinces (lands)... " (DB I.33-35)

According to the doctrine, which indicates a close connection between the Achaemenid ruler and Ahuramazda, Darius the great, had considered the right of absolute power for him. Therefore, along with talking about the will of *Ahuramazda's*, he had talked about the will of himself:

"Saith Darius the King: by the will of *Ahuramazda's* and of me much else was done ..." (DBIV. 46-48)

Also, according to this doctrine, in addition to the *law* of *Ahuramazda's*, the great king had mentioned his own *law* as the dominant rules and norms of the society:

"Saith Darius the King: ...by the will of *Ahuramazda's* these lands showed respect toward my law; as was said to them by me, thus was it done." (DB I.21-24)

However, based on his worldview and the divine right of his ruling, Darius the great could not believe in two origins for the laws

dominant the society as the “law” and “command” of the great king and that of Ahuramazda’s. Since the great king became the ruler because of Ahuramazda’s will and desire, the great king’s “command” and “law” was not considered separate from that of Ahuramazda’s. Basically, the selection of the great king for ruling was due to the moral and political manifestation of *arta* attributed in his character. On the other hand base on the claim of Darius the great, compared to other individuals who wanted to be king; he was the only person who had followed the “command” and “law” of Ahuramazda’s (DNb. 7). Due to that, Ahuramazda’s had bestowed him the ruling. Even the fact that Darius the great loved *rāsta*-<Good, Right > and was against *miθa*-<Evil> was Ahuramazda’s desire (DNb. 8).

On the other hand, the etymological investigation of the term *dāta*-<law> obviously shows how people understood this concept in the Darius the great’s empire. This term has the same root with *adadāt*, which means, “create”. The root *dā-* means positioning, constructing, and creating . This term was only used for gods because it was they who were only considered the owners of wisdom, especially the wisdom of constructing and creating (For e.g. in DNa.1-6 : DSe.1-6 , DSf.1-5)

Furthermore, in order to avoid interpretations which are based on modern political and legal view points, one must bear in mind

that the basic objective of the great king for having political power had not been considered a political one such as solving political and social crisis and improving people’s life. In contrast, his basic goal has propagandized as a religious one, i. e. fighting against a larger disorder in the world, which results from *drauga*, and protecting *arta*. As a result,

for ancient people, the law and command of the great king was considered a proportion of Ahuramazda’s law and command and a gift from him. Therefore, like the “law” and “command” of Ahuramazda, loyalty to the “law” and “command” of the great king was supposed to lead to happiness in this material world and eternal salvation afterlife. On the other hand, any kind of rebel against the great king was known as an action based on injustice.

Darius the great had also considered himself as the owner of divine virtue/ accomplishments like *xraθu*- <wisdom>> , *ušt-* <understanding> , and even *manah-* <thinking power and power of will > (see DNb.27-60) :

“Of such a sort is my understanding and my command-<framānā->: when what has been done by me thou shalt see or hear of, both in the palace and in the war-camp, this is my activity over and above my thinking power and my understanding”. (DNb.27-32)

Darius the great had stated that Ahuramazda’s had bestowed him these accomplishments or virtue:

“and the (physical) skillfulness’s which Ahuramazda’s has bestowed upon me and I have had the strength to use them – by the will of Ahuramazda’s what has been done by me, I have done with these skillfulness’s which Ahuramazda’s has bestowed upon me.” (DNb. 45 -50)

The great king’s claim for these virtues has been an influential factor in justifying his absolute power and superiority over others. Accordingly, Ahuramazda’s does not bestow these virtues to all humans, but a number of selective ones:

“O menial, vigorously make thou known of what sort I am, and of what sort my skillfulness’s, and of what sort my superiority (DNb.50-54)

Political Order Legitimacy

In Darius the Great's inscriptions, parallel with the compound of *xšāyaθiya xšāyaθiyānām* <The King of the Kings> for political order, one can imagine a similar compound known as [baga] *bagānām* <the god of gods> for gods 'order. In these inscriptions, the Achaemenid ruler is known as *xšāyaθiya vazraka* <the great king> which means the chief of all kings (DBI.1; DPe.1, 2; DPh.1 ;...). In a similar vein, Ahuramazda's is called *baga vazarka*, the chief of "other gods" (DNa.1; DNb.1 ;...), who include the various gods of the lands of Achaemenid Empire as well as Aryan gods. In the inscriptions, Arian gods are known as *viθaibiš bagaibiš*, which means the gods of (royal) family or tribe (see: DPd.14, 22, 24). In later inscriptions (Artaxerxes II, 359-404 B.C.), we become familiar with the name of some of these gods of royal tribe, like Anahita and Mitra (A2Sd. 3-4).

Therefore Darius the Great, tried to achieve the political unification of various ancient Near East lands and establish a great empire through the unification of all the gods of ancient near east, hence creating a great pantheon of gods. In this new pantheon, Ahuramazda's has been introduced as the chief of all-ancient Near East gods. Similarly, Darius the Great has been presented as the chief of kings of all lands. The attempts of Darius the Great to legitimize the political order of his empire reaches its peak when he propagandizes the creating, legislating and judging status only for Ahuramazda's, the god who has bestowed political power to him:

"great God is Ahuramazda's, who created this earth, who created yonder sky, who created man, we created happiness for man, who made Darius king..." (DNa.1-6; also see: DSe.1-6; DSf.1-5)

One can understand that Darius the Great needed these new religious instructions in order to stabilize the great Achaemenid Empire

and punish disobedient people. Before the establishment of the great Achaemenid Empire, each of the lands of this empire, such as Elam, Assyria, and Babylon, recognized the chief god of their land, such as Inshushinak, Ashur, and Marduk, as a creator, legislator, the judge who decided which people could achieve happiness in this world and salvation in after life, and the source that bestowed political power to the rulers. Darius the Great was aware that he could be the only ruler of ancient Near East only if there was a single god who had the afore mentioned attributes, that is Ahuramazda's, the god who he claimed has bestowed him the political power. Otherwise, pretenders from different lands of empire were able to claim that they had received political power from the chief god of their land who was the creator, legislator, and the source of happiness. After that, the people of these lands would rebel against Darius the Great in order to support these pretenders with the aim of achieving happiness in this life and salvation in after life.

As a result, it seems that to establish a great empire in the ancient Near East, Darius the Great has not appeared in history only as a politician. Instead, to legitimize this great empire, he tried like a prophet to propagandize new religious teachings for the people of new religious teachings for the people of the ancient Near East.

Conclusion

An investigation of Darius the Great's political thought shows that to solve a political crisis, he propagandized "the king of kings" political order. This political problem or question was how he could integrate all lands of the Near East under the authority of a great empire. He legitimized this political order based on propagandizing a new order of ancient Near East gods. In this new pantheon Ahuramazda's, who bestowed the political power to Darius

the great, has been introduced as “the great god” and the chief of all other gods. Similarly, in his political order, Darius the great has been introduced as “the great king” and the chief of all kings.

In Darius the great’s empire, the nature of politics was based on a religious worldview in which the cause of the natural and social events was the will and action of true and false divinities (*bagas* and *daivas*). While the true divinities try to develop the world based on *arta*, which means truthfulness, good law, cosmic order and justice, the false divinities try to destroy the world based on *drauga*, which means lie, bad law, chaos and injustice. Based on this worldview, the political and social crises were perceived and the political solution was offered. Any political and social crisis, such as insecurity, violence, poverty and destruction, was considered the will and action of the false divinities (*daivas*). In contrast, it was said that Ahuramazda’s has created Darius the great as a savior and bestowed him the earthly ruling in order to fight against the laws of the false divinities and propagate security and happiness in people’s life by protecting *arta*. According to this ideology, the sovereignty of Darius the great and, therefore, the domination of Ahuramazda’s laws in human life were considered as justice.

From the critical perspective, one can suggest that this definition of justice promoted absolutism and denied liberty. Since the gods were used to be the cause of natural and social events, they were the only ones who had the capacities of wisdom, activity, right and legislation. In contrast, human being was not supposed to have such virtue. Therefore, he could not bring security and happiness to the community as a wise and legislating creature. Their definition of the nature of human being was that Ahuramazda as a creature that had a

duty created him. Human being’s duty was following *arta*; that gave strength to the true divinities to defeat the false divinities and therefore develop the world. In addition, *arta*- has been considered as the basis of both order in the world and eternal happiness in the true divinity’s house. As a result, in order to overcome political and social crises and achieve a desirable society, human being should follow the example of true divinity’s house by making moral and political aspects of *arta*- dominate the *dos* and *don*’ts of his individual, social, and political life. At the same time, he should avoid moral and political aspects of *drauga*-. Thereupon, people must have an absolute obedience of the great king who was the earthly representative of the chief of true divinities.

The great king’s answer to the questions “who is human?”, “how did he come into being?”, and “what is his end?” was not the only way to justify his authority. He also connected the subjects of human’s afterlife destiny and the political power to legitimize an absolute authority. He introduced Ahuramazda’s as a legislator and the one who bestows political power. He also recognized Ahuramazda is a judge, the one who determines humans’ happiness in this world and their salvation afterlife. According to this ideology, those who obeyed Darius the great is ruling, not only reached happiness in this material world, but also achieved salvation in afterlife. On the contrary, any attempt to riot and depose Darius the great was considered an attempt against the will and desire of Ahuramazda’s. These rioters were the ones opposed to the nature and end of human creation and followed *drauga*. As a result, they reinforced the false divinities to create chaos in the world. In fact, along with the dual nature of “good” and “evil” in the great king’s worldview, he also

had a dual pattern of “friendship” and “animosity (or loyal and disloyal people)” in his policy. One cannot say with certainty which of these dualities has formed the basis for the other one. However, according to the inscriptions, it might be said that these two dualities have always been present along with each other. Those individuals who were the great king’s loyal friends were the followers of arta and the ones that were disloyal and were considered enemy were the disciples of drauga. The first group attempted to construct the world according to justice and cosmic order; the second group, however, tried to destroy the world according to injustice. As a result, according to Darius the great’s inscription, the first group should be rewarded in this world by the great king, as Ahuramazda’s gives them their rewards afterlife. In contrast, the great king in this world should punish the second group, as they are punished by Ahuramazda’s afterlife.

It can be assumed that during Darius the great’s empire, there have never been discussions of liberty as a criterion or even as a part of happiness. This is because happiness was defined in justice (not liberty); even this type of justice meant following the laws of Ahuramazda’s, arta, and therefore absolutely obeying the political ruler. In fact, since they did not consider any wise and legislative status for human being, they could not have an understanding of the concept of liberty. Of course, Darius the great propagandized some virtue like those of Ahuramazdasuch as wisdom, understanding, thinking power, and power of will for himself. Based on these claims, he also spread the idea that similar to Ahuramazda’s he has “command” and “law”, too. However according to the reasons that were mentioned above, based on Darius the great’s worldview and also the divine right of his ruling, these claims had no influence in changing the nature of politics from a sacred

basis to a secular one. In addition, considering these virtues for the great king has been an influential factor in justifying his absolute power because Ahuramazda’s does not bestow these virtues to all humans, but a number of selective ones like Darius the great. On the other hand, we can mention that the principal motif for the great king to consider the gods’ attributes (e.g. wisdom and legislation) for him originates from the historical competitions between warriors and priests. In the older period during which the king-priests ruled over Aryan’s tribes, they never claimed their own “law” and “command”. They believed that they had the ability to communicate with gods and observe the rules created by legislator gods like Mitra-Varuna. In contrast, as the historical trend of achieving the political ruling by warriors like Darius the great was based on force and power; therefore, they could not gain legitimacy over priests whose ruling was based on their spiritual roles. Due to the historical trend of king-warriors’ achievement of political ruling did not match people’s worldview. They had to base their ruling legitimacy on religious beliefs. However, unlike priests, they could not claim shamanic ability for themselves because of their social origin. Therefore, they tried to enhance their spiritual status in competition with the priests. As a result, they called themselves selected persons and gods’ representatives on earth. They also considered gods’ attributes, such as wisdom, legislation and absolute power, for themselves. The peak of king-warriors’ attempts to compete against the old history of king-priests’ political ruling is when they depict their faces and figure similar to those of their chief god in their reliefs. As Darius, the great depict his face like Ahuramazda’s in his reliefs.

However, Darius the great’s laws brought about a unique order and unity across the wide lands with various cultures, religions, and po-

litical histories, which lasted more than two hundred years and influenced on subsequent empires. If the king-warrior's status and claims like those of Darius the great are studied within the context of the history of legal and political thoughts, they can be regarded as important challenges for divine laws. This challenge has gained the attention of intelligent thinkers of ancient world to compare human's legislation with that of god. Since Plato (428-348 BC) began the *Laws* with this question: "To whom do you ascribe the authorship of your legal arrangements, Strangers? To a god or to some man?" (Plato, 1926: 624 a). Plato introduced Darius the great as the one who "thought good to manage the kingdom by enacting laws" (Plato, *ibid*: III. 695 c-d), because for the first time in the history, Darius had succeeded to unify various people and cultures around a just law based on a multiculturalism policy. About two thousand years after Plato, Hegel (1770-1831) also praised Achaemenids' policy in unifying various people within the framework of a single state, while each of these people had retained its own individuality, manners, customs and norms. From Hegel's view, this issue was the outset of a process in the history, which he called "consciousness of freedom"; the process which began with the Achaemenid Empire (Hegel, 1956: 173,174, 187).

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