

Article

THE LANGUAGE ISSUE IN THE IRANIAN CONSTITUTION OF 1906 (MASHRUTEH)

Habib-ollah Fazeli

Abstract: This article delves into the nexus between language and politics in the modern era, focusing on the linguistic discourse within the Persian constitution of 1906. The core contention of the article is that the politicization of language, facilitated by industrialization, underpins the political readings and inverted interpretations of language's role in the modern era. Through analyzing the Iranian Constitution of 1906 alongside related documents, laws, and enactments of the Constitutional Assembly, we illustrate that the deliberate silence surrounding language within the 1906 constitution and among its authors signifies a conscious cultural stance. They regarded Persian as the natural medium and common language among all Iranian, representing both the scientific language and a shared national heritage.

Keywords: The Persian Constitution, Language Policy, First Constitutional Assembly, Provincial and regional councils

1. INTRODUCTION

The interplay between language and politics has emerged as a significant topic in Iranian social and political sciences, particularly in recent decades. This stems partly from the growing global importance of language in philosophical and social science studies, a subject beyond the scope of this article. Here, we posit that industrialization and politicization are pivotal in drawing attention to the language issue. We argue that language, due to its high capacity for “mobilization”, has made it a focal point for political groups, modern states, and pragmatic elites.

This principle has been evident worldwide, from the United States to the Middle East and Iran. Given the emotional connections and loyalty speakers have toward their

HABIB-OLLAH FAZELI, Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Tehran, is the Chief Editor of Politics and Laws Quarterly. His research interests lie in constitutional law, national identity, and the history of legal and political thought in Iran. Among his notable works are and “Problematizing Iranian University Autonomy” and Educational Policies Regarding National Identity in Elementary Schools. Furthermore, he has translated *Law is Politics* from English into Persian.

language, its utilization will continue to be targeted by politicians and elites. Constitutions, as foundational documents of states, have distinct linguistic cultures and language policies. While some explicitly designate official and national languages (e.g., the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran), others remain silent on the matter (e.g., the Persian Constitution of 1906).

In this article, we scrutinize the Persian 1906 constitution and its contextual discourse, particularly its silence on the issue of an “official and national” language. We explore whether this silence carries significance and how it can be interpreted. We hypothesize that the absence of reference to the Persian language in the 1906 Constitution underscores its intrinsic significance as both a *lingua franca* and a common scientific and cultural language, and the perception of it as a national heritage in which all linguistic and cultural groups have participated in its continuity and construction. The primary interpretation drawn from the constitution’s silence on language is contentment with the status quo and the imperative of its continuity.

Methodologically, we employ an archival analysis method and a sociological approach to explore the linguistic culture of the Iranian 1906 constitution. We contend that the Iranian linguistic culture possesses distinct characteristics compared to Western European societies, and applying European linguistic patterns to Iran may lead to misconceptions.

2. LANGUAGE: AN ARENA IN THE INTERSECTION OF INDUSTRY AND POLITICS

Since the 20th century, a significant body of philosophical and social science research has been dedicated to the study of language and its significance. It is evident that the scope of language studies extends far beyond mere spoken and written communication, as they delve into the realm of “empirical linguistics.” Language studies have also assumed great importance in political science, as humans, inherently political animals, utilize language to formulate and convey their thoughts. This has led to language being regarded as the locus of thought, and the intentional use of language has become a concern for states and political groups alike. Hence, fields such as “empirical political linguistics” have gained prominence, focusing on the communication processes within political systems and the instrumental role of language in disseminating and exchanging information (Dallmayr 2010, 16).

However, the historical trajectories of non-Western societies have often been overlooked, and ethnographic and sociological research in these areas has been lacking. Consequently, many societal issues are analyzed through the lens of Western European and North American analytical models, leading to potential misrepresentations of societies like Iran. Structural conflicts between national languages and local dialects have historically plagued certain Western European societies, with languages like Italian, modern French, and English eventually asserting dominance. Falling into overgeneralization can produce artificial and, more specifically, ‘Orientalist’ research and theoretical constructs concerning Iran, portraying a “conflictual” rather than an

evolutionary relationship between Iranians' national language and their local dialects and languages. Thus, even before conducting any research on Iran, the outcome is predetermined, reducing Iran's linguistic-historical developments to prefabricated European sociological models.

It is important to note that the significance and role of language in nation-building and the relationship between national and local languages vary across countries and cannot be universally applied. For instance, as noted by Hobsbawm (1990) in his discussion on the distinct roles of the national language in Italy and Germany compared to England, language was more than a mere tool for literature and expressing ideas for the people of Italy and Germany. Rather, the national language was the very essence of German and Italian identity, bearing a greater responsibility for national cohesion than the English language did for its speakers (Hutchinson and Smith 2007, 28).

THE ISSUE OF LANGUAGE IN NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONS

The treatment of language within national constitutions lacks a uniform approach. Various factors such as state's mode of existence at the time of constitution drafting, concurrent events, and the inclinations of the constitution's authors significantly influence the inclusion or omission of language-related provisions. Generally, constitutions can be categorized based on their treatment of language. Some explicitly designate an official and national language, as seen in the Constitutions of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon, Turkey, Russia, and some others. Conversely, there are constitution that remain silent on the language issue, referring to it implicitly or explicitly through prevailing policies and procedures, which in practice signifies acceptance of the current linguistic status quo. Notable examples in this category include the constitutions of South Korea, the United States, China, and Iran's Constitutional Revolution.

The silence of the constitution regarding language does not preclude the existence of ordinary laws and executive regulations in this domain. For instance, despite the Chinese constitution's silence on language matters, China has enacted laws and regulations governing language use. In 2000, China passed legislation prohibiting the use of foreign words and improper use of the Chinese language, mandating government employees to adhere to the standard form of Chinese (Putonghua) in communication (Spolsky 2004, 2). Similarly, despite France's constitution lacking explicit language purification and standardization policies, the government demonstrates a keen commitment to preserving the French language, particularly in the face of English dominance. According to Spolsky (1998, 69), there was a time when French legislation forbade the holding of government meetings and international scientific conferences in any language besides French.

The Turkish Constitution is another focal point in language policy discussions. Given Turkey's diverse linguistic landscape and the sizable Kurdish minority, the constitution adopts a prescriptive approach, emphasizing the dominance of the Turkish language without addressing the rights of other linguistic groups. Article 42

explicitly mandates Turkish as the language of instruction in educational institutions, excluding other languages (Spolsky 2004, 2). However, this policy has sparked debates over national identity and posed implementation challenges, prompting concessions to Kurdish linguistic rights since 2002, influenced by EU integration efforts.

In contrast, the US Constitution, reflecting the prevalence of English and British influence, does not explicitly address language issues. Nonetheless, the US legal system features numerous laws and regulations addressing language matters, such as the Voting Rights Act (1965), Civil Rights Act (1964) interpretations, and the Bilingual Education Act (1967), responding to societal and political challenges arising from linguistic diversity.

The newness of American society and the gradual presence of immigrants with languages other than English and religions other than Protestantism have gradually turned the language issue into a societal and political problematic. Nonetheless, the US government, both in national and state levels, features numerous laws and regulations addressing language matters, such as the Voting Rights Act (1965), Civil Rights Act (1964) interpretations, and the Bilingual Education Act (1967).

Thus, language policy is a prevalent consideration in constitutions. No rational state can be found that is indifferent to the status and quality of its national language and linguistic heritage. The absence of explicit language provisions in constitutions does not necessarily denote linguistic neutrality but rather tacit acceptance of the prevailing linguistic status quo. In this context, we will explore the language policy in the Iranian constitution of 1906, aiming to elucidate the “linguistic culture” of political leaders, lawmakers of the Constitutional Revolution, and intellectual elites of that era.

4. IDENTITY, LANGUAGE AND THE DISCOURSE OF THE 1906 CONSTITUTION

The 1906 Constitution and its 1907 Amendment, did not exhibit any discernible sensitivity towards the matter of the official language. There was neither an overt strategy to establish the status of the national language nor any explicit mention or chapter dedicated to the subject within the constitution. This silence prompts inquiry into its interpretation.

In this article, the concepts of language and identity are brought together, recognizing their inseparability, particularly within the Iranian context where language serves as both a reflection of identity and a key element in its perpetuation. Utilizing the concept of discourse suggests that grasping the deeper implications of the Iranian Constitutional Law necessitates moving beyond literal or legal interpretations. Understanding the essence of the constitution requires delving into the zeitgeist in which it was conceived.

I contend that the mentioned silence of in the Persian Constitution carries fundamental meaning. It suggests that the authors not only regarded the establishment and inclusiveness of Persian as the national language of all Iranians as self-evident and “natural,” but also esteemed it as the national heritage of the Iranian people.

Consequently, the silence on the language issue implies satisfaction and confidence in the perpetuation of the existing linguistic status quo.

The Constitutional Revolution was underpinned by a discourse emphasizing national sovereignty, civil nationalism, and liberalism. Analysis of parliamentary documents and discussions reveals that the revolution's leaders and parliamentary representatives were primarily concerned with establishing national sovereignty and its necessities. Examination of the speeches and behavior of representatives of diverse linguistic backgrounds in parliament, the press, and associations reaffirms this perspective. To substantiate this hypothesis, we will explore key discursive elements and developments related to the language issue during the Constitutional Revolution era, culminating in an examination of the constitution's text and resolutions passed by the first term of the Iranian National Assembly.

4.1. LITERATURE AND PLAYS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL ERA

Persian poetry serves as a barometer for gauging the societal and intellectual shifts in Iran throughout history, evident in the nomenclature of poetic styles or themes reflecting prominent political developments of each era. Pre-Constitutional Revolution poetry mirrored the stagnant and tumultuous atmosphere of the Qajar era, often referred to as the “era of repeated panegyrics” by Shafiei Kadkani. Conversely, poetry during the Constitutional era amalgamated sentiments of regret for past woes, hope for the future, and love for the homeland. The dominant voice during the Constitutional Revolution echoed either patriotic fervor or social critique, exemplified by stirring verses like:

O noble land of Iran, my homeland,
O in your love, my soul and body are immersed...
(see. Shafiei Kadkani 1990, 34).

Playwriting, as a medium for expressing socio-political goals, constitutes another vital intellectual and social sphere in Iran, albeit receiving less attention. Plays possess intrinsic importance due to their lower political sensitivity and their potential to reflect the zeitgeist through the personal identities of their writers. While not delving into a detailed analysis, a meta-analysis of plays from the Constitutional era reveals a consistent thematic focus on freedom, patriotism, and opposition to despotism.

Several noteworthy translations of plays, such as those of Molière and Shakespeare, emphasizing liberal themes, emerged in the years preceding the 1906 revolution. Of particular significance are two translations from Ottoman Turkish to Persian by Iranian Azeri intellectuals. The first, “Teatr’e Zahhak,” translated in 1902 by Ajudanbashi (Amir Tuman), in his own words, “for the use of Iranians”. It chronicles the uprising of Kaveh against the despotic king Zahhak, culminating in the establishment of justice under Fereydu’n’s reign (Taravardizadeh 2011, 106). The second, “Name-ye Naderi,” translated by Tajmah Afaq al-Dawlah in 1904, mourns the downfall of the powerful Iranian king, Nader Shah (107).

Following the Constitutional Revolution, the art of performance and playwriting in Azerbaijan province, especially in Tabriz, also became an important channel for narrating the history of Iran and the Constitutional Revolution. An analysis of plays—compiled in the book *Theater in Tabriz*—underscores the prevalence of patriotism and liberalism as central themes. Notably, the play “The Iranian Constitutional Revolution,” frequently staged in Tabriz, portrays the roles of Sattar Khan and Baqer Khan in the revolution. A climactic scene depicts Sattar Khan’s refusal of refuge offered by the Russian consul, emphasizing his commitment to Iranian sovereignty with the stirring declaration, “I want the seven countries to be under the flag of Iran, not for me to go under a foreign flag...” The performance concludes with the raising of the Iranian flag and chants of “Long live the Constitution” and “Long live Iran” (Ranjbar Fakhri 1983, 679).

4.2. THE PRESS AND THE ISSUE OF SCRIPT REFORM

Examining the evolution of the press and newspapers from the pre-Constitutional Revolution years to a decade thereafter serves as a valuable testament, shedding light on prevailing discourse and concepts embedded in the minds and language of Iranians. During the Constitutional Revolution, all proclamations, broadsheets, and announcements were exclusively in Persian. Even in Tabriz, which was in a sense the beating heart of the revolution, no announcement or proclamation was printed other than in Persian.

The post-revolutionary year of 1907 marked a notable surge in press freedom, with over 80 newspapers published nationwide, including five new ones in Tabriz alone. Notably, newspapers in Azerbaijan province were freely published for 15 years after the revolution, totaling 90 publications. These newspapers predominantly focused on critiquing the actions of the Qajar dynasty, championing constitutionalism, combating religious superstition, advocating for women’s rights, and promoting modernization (Majidi 2003, 249).

Of significance is the fact that all these publications, apart from those of Armenian and Chaldean minorities, were in Persian, aligning with the discourse of Iranophilia and patriotism. Moreover, Examining the documents, correspondence, and demands of the various Constitutionalist leaders and associations in Tabriz as well as other cities with the government, the parliament and revolutionaries in Tehran, which have been collected and republished in books such as *Qabale-ye Tarikh* (The Deed of History) or *Letters from Tabriz*, reveals no signs of linguistic and local identity-seeking demands (Afshar 1989, 22-31).

Another noteworthy identity movement was the movement for Persian script reform, which began around a decade before the revolution and was led by intellectuals and political figures. The impetus for this reform stemmed from aspirations for progress and alignment with European civilization, drawing on the experiences of the Ottoman Empire and Japan, and ultimately desire to cleanse the Persian language from Arabic words. The movement was deeply intertwined with idealistic nationalism,

serving as a response to the upheavals of the Qajar era and territorial losses, particularly the irrevocable loss of the Caucasus region. This loss was particularly poignant for Iranian Azeri elites, who harbored a lingering sense of bitterness over the matter. Hence, it's unsurprising that the majority of nationalist Iranian political and intellectual figures hailed from the Azerbaijan region. Their pivotal role in reshaping notions of homeland and nation underscored the significance of Azerbaijani involvement in shaping the discourse of Iranian Constitutionalism.

Talibof Tabrizi's words encapsulate the prevailing sentiment among intellectuals during this epoch: "In these last fifty years (after the loss of the Caucasus), we have been compelled to evacuate and abandon our ancestral land (Herat) of several thousand years. Half of Baluchistan was severed from our country through the intervention of a state, and the rights to determine the governor of the pashalik of Baghdad and to oversee the income and expenditures of the holy sites were stripped from us by another state" (Talibof 1967, 124). Elsewhere, while critiquing the social milieu and lamenting the loss of national independence and unity, he asserts: "Human zeal, courage, and virtue exist only in safeguarding the homeland's honor, chastity, and prosperity, and in the upbringing of children of the patria, and the progression of religion and customs of the homeland" (92).

The tribulations faced by Iranians residing in the Caucasus and Iranian migrant workers under the rule of the Russian Empire—navigating Russian employers and legal frameworks—played a pivotal role in fostering patriotic sentiment among them. As evidenced by documents from the Constitutional Revolution era, Iranians in the Caucasus, particularly in Baku, viewed the revolution with a sense of optimism. Concurrent with the dispatch of representatives from various cities to the First Constitutional Assembly, a missive appeared in the Assembly's newspaper on behalf of twenty thousand Iranians residing in the Caucasus and Baku. This correspondence expressed their desire to also have representation in the Iranian Constitutional Assembly, although regrettably, this plea was not addressed during the Assembly's proceedings (Kermani 1990, 795).

The discourse surrounding script reform during the Constitutional Revolution era unfolded within the broader context of Iranian nationalism and modernization. Script reform emerged as a significant element within the discourse of the revolution. Noteworthy figures such as Akhundzadeh, in his work *A Treatise on the New Alphabet*, and Malkam Khan, in *A Sample of the Human Script*, actively contributed to this discourse. Malkam Khān, in particular, proposed a script sample designed to be compatible with movable type printing, addressing some of the deficiencies of the prevailing script. His proposal advocated for a script where the number of written words corresponds to the number of sounds, emphasizing the need for separate letters instead of the connected script prevalent in Persian writing. He argued that the connectivity of letters posed a fundamental obstacle to reform, asserting, "The source of all the problems of our script is in the connection of the letters. With the separation

of the letters, all the defects of our script will be naturally resolved” (Malkam Khan in Ostadi 2013, 164).

The significance of the intellectual movement aimed at reforming and purifying the Persian script lies in the fact that the representatives and leaders of the Constitutional Revolution were not merely oblivious to the identity-related developments and the national language issue. On the contrary, individuals like Taqizadeh and Mostashar al-Dawlah actively participated in this movement, demonstrating a profound awareness of the significance of the national language in Iran and its nature.

4.3. THE TEXT AND THE CONTEXT OF THE 1906 CONSTITUTION AND THE ISSUE OF LANGUAGE

An essential concept in the discussion of identity and national identity is the notion of “will” - a determination rooted in the desire to either being or maintaining a particular condition. The leaders and members of the first Constitutional Assembly displayed a distinct resolve to preserve Iran’s existential position. Upon reviewing the achievements and legislations of the First Parliament, it becomes evident that their endeavors were predominantly focused on addressing fundamental issues, while sidelining peripheral matters. Considerable parliamentary effort was allocated towards organizing the government’s financial and administrative structures, as well as regulating the relationship between the government, military, and the people. It is arguable that the three primary concerns underscored in the Constitution and the decisions of the First Assembly pertained to financial matters, security, and the delineation of certain freedoms.

While the Belgian Constitution, and subsequently those of Tsarist Russia and Bulgaria, served as influential references during the drafting of the Persian Constitution, it is crucial to acknowledge that the procedures and institutions outlined therein did not mirror those of the mentioned foreign Constitutions. For instance, Belgium’s linguistically diverse composition and significant social cleavages, as evidenced by Article 4 of its Constitution which recognizes four linguistic regions, necessitated a distinct language policy. It is noteworthy that despite Iran’s linguistic diversity and cultural intricacies, the Iranian representatives did not equate the country’s cultural and social fabric with Belgium’s diverse linguistic structure, nor did they seek to replicate Belgium’s language policy. While the Iranian representatives drew inspiration from the Belgian Constitution regarding individual and social rights, they consciously omitted the discussion of Belgium’s language policy, recognizing the unique sociopolitical landscape of Iran.

This observation underscores a deliberate linguistic silence within the Constitution of 1906, signaling a belief that the organic and historical evolution of the national language and local languages in Iran differed significantly from the trajectory of official and ethnic languages in Europe.

Furthermore, it is evident that the Constitution of 1906 and the deliberations of the First Parliament were steeped in civic nationalism and idealism. According to Article 11 and the oath form, the representatives pledged allegiance to advancing no purpose “other than the interests of the Iranian state and nation.” In the Iranian Constitution, the discursive boundaries coincide with the territorial or political boundaries of the Iranian state, with no supranational or ideological obligations assigned to the king, parliament, or government. The word “nation” and its concomitants are used 19 times in the text of the Constitution, underscoring a national focus, devoid of cosmopolitan terms such as “ummah.”

The representatives prioritized the resolution of internal tumult over other concerns, symbolizing their commitment to internal stability and progress. They even envisioned the Iranian Constitutional Revolution as a beacon of hope for the Islamic world, as articulated by representatives from the province of Azerbaijan in their speech upon entering the parliament: “dar al-shura-ye kubra [The Great House of Consultation]... this refuge of the homeland wanderers... all the Islamic world has its eyes of hope fixed on this center of salvation, in fact the world is waiting to see how it will bring this heavy burden to its destination” (Morvarid 1998, 82).

Thus far, our examination has sought to underscore the temporal and linguistic consciousness evident within the Constitutional Assembly. It is from this perspective that we should interpret the contents of the Iranian Constitution—and subsequently, the Law of Provincial and Regional councils (*anjoman-ha-ye iyalati va velayati*). Exploring the absence of a dedicated principle or chapter on language within the Constitution requires an understanding of the broader context. Had leaders of civil associations (*anjoman-ha*) or Azerbaijani representatives in the Assembly demanded the inclusion principles regarding language or local self-governance, their considerable influence could have readily facilitated the incorporation of such provisions into the 51-article Constitution of 1906 or its amendment.

Civil associations played a pivotal role in the approval of the amendment, with *anjoman-e qeibi-ye Tabriz* (the secret association of Tabriz), dubbed by Kasravi as the “board of the revolution,” instrumental in the assassination of Amin al-Sultan Atabak, thus paving the way for drafting the addendum (Sardari-nia Tabrizi 1984, 139-146). Notably, these associations pressured Mohammad Ali Shah into issuing a handwritten document affirming “the state of Iran is among the constitutional states” (Khubru-ye Pak 2012, 194). However, it is essential to highlight that there is no documented evidence of these associations advocating for linguistic or local privileges. Nazem al-Islam Kermani, in his book, included the demands of the associations and the people of the province of Azerbaijan under the title “The Intentions of the Patriotic residents of Azerbaijan,” encompassing seven issues (the number of ministers, the dismissal of the Belgian advisor, the freedom of Sa’ed al-Mulk, the writing of the amendment, and the prohibition of the ministry of princes (Nazem al-Islam Kermani 2011, 752), all of which received favorable royal responses. It is clear that the power of the associations and

representatives and the weakness of the government were to the extent that any demand received a favorable response

While many modern state constitutions dedicate a chapter to language-related matters and national symbols, the Constitution of 1906 remained conspicuously silent on the issue of language. However, Article 5 of the amendment stipulated the design and color specifications of the Iranian flag. The Constitution ensured freedom of the press in Article 20, with the exception of publications deemed heretical or containing harmful religious material. Censorship was prohibited, but any breaches of press laws resulted in punitive measures against publishers or writers.

The drafting and approval of the Press Law by the First National Assembly represented a significant legislative milestone, in alignment with the principles laid out in the constitution. This law specifically addressed censorship, focusing on the publication of religious books promoting innovation, as outlined in Article 4 (Haghdar 2004, 702-708). Additionally, Articles 18, 19, and 21 of the Constitution, which pertain to education, training, and civil associations, warrant attention in the context of language analysis. Article 18 guarantees free education and training without explicit reference to language considerations. Article 19 discusses compulsory education and the responsibility of the Ministry of Science and Education, emphasizing the establishment of government and publicly funded schools. Furthermore, Article 21 ensures the freedom of associations nationwide, conditioned upon adherence to religious principles and Sharia law.

In short, the absence of explicit linguistic demands and the unrivaled position of the Persian language as the medium for education and training were key factors leading to the Constitution's omission of language-related provisions, thus leaving this aspect entirely unrestricted.¹

4.5. THE REGULATIONS BOOKLET AND THE LAW OF PROVINCIAL AND REGIONAL COUNCILS

The enactment of the Law of Provincial and Regional Councils represented another significant resolution of the First National Assembly, aligned with the directives outlined in Articles 90, 91, and 92 of the 1906 Constitution Amendment. As per the Constitution, these councils wielded substantial authority in implementing "reforms concerning public interest." The genesis of the provincial

¹ The repeated reference to the Ja'fari Ithna 'Ashari religion and the conditionality of all political-social activities on non-contradiction with it should be sought more than anything in the religious and sectarian developments of the period after Muhammad Shah until the Constitutional Revolution, fostering heightened sensitivity among clergy and religious authorities to socio-political changes. This period witnessed the emergence of composite sects like Shaykhism, Karim-Khaniya, Baqiriya, Ahqaqiya, and ultimately the Babi and Baha'i sects, contributing to religious-political turmoil, temporarily quelled by Amir Kabir's execution of Seyyed Muhammad Ali Bab (Mashkoor 1996: 88-92). Additionally, the activities of Sufi sects during the Qajar era, characterized by the proliferation of new emerging sects, further intensified Parliament's and religious scholars' concerns regarding printing, publishing, and association activities.

council idea, beyond Iran's administrative history or the Constitutional Assembly's impetus, stemmed from the inefficiency and corruption inherent in the Qajar political system. Previously, in 1875, initial steps were taken in this direction with the formulation of the "Regulations Booklet" by Nasser al-Din Shah and his Chancellor Mirza Hossein Khan Sepahsalar. This idea later evolved into the Law of Provincial and Regional Councils in the first term of the National Assembly. It is noteworthy that the establishment of provincial councils for local administration in Iran was not a response to political, linguistic groups or local associations' pressures but rather a preexisting governmental initiative dating back a decade prior to the Constitutional Revolution under the rubric of "Regulations."

Ketabcheh-ye Tanzimat (the Regulations Booklet of the Sublime State and the Protected Lands of Persia) constitutes a compendium of laws aimed at leveraging administrative deconcentration to enhance governmental efficacy. Comprising 47 principles, it delineates the authorities and responsibilities of local governors, encompassing tasks such as tax collection during certain months, qanat excavation, debt settlement, and maintenance of road and street security (*Ketabcheh-ye Tanzimat* 1873, 4-19). Essentially, the Regulations Booklet endeavors to bolster government authority and institute a more centralized administrative framework by delineating administrative functions and curtailing the rebelliousness and self-declared autonomy of local governors and powers. The Regulations Assembly (*majlis-e tanzimat*), comprising heads of government departments (excluding the governor, who serves as the executor), deliberated on local public affairs. This collective approach resulted in diminishing the power of local governors while bolstering governmental authority and directives, thereby transitioning from individual to collective management and reducing corruption. Before the formulation of the Regulations Booklet, Nasser al-Din Shah attempted to establish a nationwide organization for the country's judicial system by ordering the establishment of the Ministry of Justice and the Justice Houses of Iran in 1872, albeit unsuccessfully. Drawing from the experiences of this initiative, the Regulations Booklet was initially implemented in Qazvin, Qom, Saveh, and Nahavand, rather than in more distant provinces such as Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, and Baluchistan.

Hence, the establishment of local councils was influenced by the Regulations Booklet and its experiences and the idea and initiation of it did not originate from the Constitutional Assembly. However, given the discourse of constitutionalism, which embraced civic nationalism, political liberalism, and the reduction of royal authority, the introduction of provincial and regional councils as a means to engage the public in governance gained traction.

Following the impetus for administrative deconcentration, a notable aspect of Law of Provincial and Regional Councils is its reliance on operational and regional criteria rather than linguistic, political, or cultural considerations in determining territorial administrative divisions, as outlined in the "Law on the Establishment of Provinces and Regions and the Instructions for Governors." Throughout the principles, regulations, and resolutions of this law, there is a conspicuous absence of provisions

addressing local, linguistic, or dialectical demands. Article 9 of the Law of the Provincial and Regional Councils mandates that candidates possess proficiency in Persian literacy, while Article 87 outlines the responsibility of provincial and regional councils to deliberate on matters concerning the province's welfare, security, and development. Notably, the law does not assign specific cultural responsibilities to provincial and regional councils, except for Article 61 of the Law on the Establishment of Provinces and Regions, which mandates local governors to oversee elementary and secondary education schools and collaborate with the local office of the Ministry of Education.

Analysis and scrutiny of the published documents of the councils also reveals that the primary focus of their members was the fiscal and administrative management of their respective regions. As noted by the researcher and compiler of the documents of the provincial and regional councils, despite their extensive powers and the government's relative frailty, not a single instance can be cited where any of them challenged the state's authority or possibly claimed notions of secession from the nation (Kohestani nejad 2011, 54).

5. CONCLUSION

Modern politics tends towards homogenization and extraterritorial intervention, and is therefore interested in the emotional and mobilizing capacities of language. A primary starting point within this article is that one of the fundamental challenges surrounding language issues in various societies lies in its politicization and its entanglement with power dynamics at both national and international levels. Furthermore, another notable challenge is the tendency to apply irrelevant sociolinguistic frameworks when analyzing the historical and sociological realities of societies like Iran.

An illustrative example of such non-historical generalizations and their detrimental consequences can be observed in the perspectives of some American researchers and policymakers. On one hand, they express apprehensions regarding the growing multilingualism within American society and the potential erosion of its national identity. On the other hand, they advocate, through a political lens, for the dissolution of certain countries in the Middle East based on linguistic divisions.

Based on above methodological orientation, this article endeavors to shed light on the treatment of language within the Iranian Constitution of the 1906, drawing from historical evidence and documents. The silence of the Constitution on the issue of language holds significant meaning, as interpreted in this study. Analysis of the linguistic culture of the Constitution's authors, as evident in their speeches, writings, correspondence, and discussions, reveals a conscious and meaningful silence on the language issue—a silence reflective of their satisfaction with the entrenched position of the Persian language. This silence underscores the Persian language's role as both the common medium of communication among Iranians and as a national language and heritage.

Given the notable influence that associations and provincial councils as well as Kurdish, Lur, Baluch, Sistani, and especially Azerbaijani representatives had in the Constitutional Assembly, the possibility of incorporating “linguistic or local demands” into the Constitution and its amendment was easily available. Examination of the evidence and documents highlights a collective understanding among constitutional institutions and representatives regarding the Persian language as a shared “national heritage,” rather than belonging to any specific ethnic group. In fact, the non-politicization of language within constitutional discourse facilitated its consideration as a historical and cultural reality for all groups. However, in the ensuing decades, Iran became increasingly involved in global politics as well as experienced the expansion of modern state’s institutions and saw the proliferation of imported political ideologies. These developments set the stage for a politicized interpretation of linguistic culture. Industrialization, with its potential for shaping an “imagined linguistic society,” combined with the emergence of discontented elites who were critical of modern state policies, offered another platform for reinforcing an inverted understanding of linguistic culture in Iran. This had notable political and social implications in the contemporary decades. The politicized interpretation of the Law of Provincial and regional Councils exemplify this phenomenon, explored comprehensively in this article. Similarly, the political reading and reinterpretations of Article 15 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic by ethnicists reflect a similar trend, warranting further investigation in subsequent research endeavors.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

REFERENCES

- Afkhami, Ali, and Negar Davari Ardakani. 2005. “Barnameh-rizi-ye Zaban va Negareshhay-e Zabani” [Language Planning and Language Attitudes]. *Majallah-ye Daneshkadeh-ye Adabiyat* 5 (173): 1-23.
- Afshar, Iraj. 1989. *Qabale-ye Tarikh (Asnad-e Mashrutiyyat)* [Title Deeds of History (Documents of the Constitutional Revolution)]. Tehran: Tala’iyyeh.
- Akbari, Seyyed Hamed. 2011. *Matn-e Qavanin-e Asasi-ye Keshvarha-ye Jahan beh Hamrah-e Asnad-e Moheem-e Beyn al-Melali* [The Texts of the Constitutions of the Countries of the World Along with Important International Documents]. Shiraz: Navid-i Shiraz.
- Amir-Arjomand, Sa’id. 2003. “Qanun-i Asasi-yi Mashruteh” [The Constitution]. In *Iranika*, translated by Peymann Matin. Tehran: Amirkabir.
- Ashraf, Ahmad. 1980. *Mawane’-e Tarikhi-ye Roshd-e Sarmayeh-dari dar Iran (Dawrah-yi Qajariyyeh)* [Historical Obstacles to the Growth of Capitalism in Iran (The Qajar Period)]. Tehran: Zamineh.
- Badreie, Fereydon. 1976. *Gozarash-i darbareh-ye Farhangistan-e Iran* [A Report on the Academy of Persian Language and Literature]. Tehran: Academy of Persian Language and Literature.
- Chung Sun, Tseng. 1996. *Thought, Language and Culture*. Nameh-ye Farhang, translated by Abbas Imam, 6, no. 23: 86-93. Tehran.

- Dallmayr, Ferd. 2010. *Language and Politics*. Translated by Mas'ud Aryaei-Nia, Morteza Bahrani, and Seyyed Muhsin 'Alavi-Pour. Tehran: Pazhuhishkadeh-ye Motaleat-e Farhangi va Ijtimai..
- Davari Ardakani, Negar. 2009. "Barnameh-rizi-ye Zaban, Farhang-e Zabani va Mu'allifeh-ha-ye An" [*Language Planning, Language Culture and Its Components*]. *Faslnameh-ye Tahqiqat-e Farhangi* 7 (1): 99-121. Tehran.
- Fallah, Morteza. 2008. "Naqsh-e Zaban-e Farsi dar Yekparchegi va Vahdat-e Milli-ye Iran" [The Role of the Persian Language in National Unity and Integration in Iran]. *Faslnameh-ye Motaleat Mellî* 9 (4): 164-131.
- Gellner, Ernest. 2007. *Melligara 'i* [Nationalism]. Translated by Mustafa Yunusi and 'Ali Murshidi-Zad. Tehran: Pazhuhishkadeh-ye Motaleat-e Rahbordi.
- Gole Golab, Huseyn, and Sadiq Kiya. 1976. *Farhangistan-e Iran va Farhangistan-e Zaban-e Irani* [The Academy of Iran and the Academy of the Iranian Language], Tehran: Publications of the Academy of Iran.
- Habibi, Hasan. 2006. *Bahsi dar Siyasat-e 'Ilmi-ye Keshvar va Jaygah-e Farhangistan-ha* [A Discussion on the Scientific Policy of the Country and the Position of the Academies]. Tehran: Persian Language and Literature Academy.
- Haqdar, 'Ali-Asghar, ed. 2005. *Majlis-e Avval va Nahad-ha-ye Mashrutiyat, Surat-e Mashruh-e Mozakarat, Mosavvat, Asnad, Khaterat va Tarikh-Nigari-ye Dowreh-ye Avval-e Majlis-e Shura-ye Milli* [The First Assembly and the Institutions of the Constitutional Revolution, Discussions, Resolutions, Documents, Memoirs and Historiography of the First Period of the National Consultative Assembly]. Tehran: Mehr-namag.
- Heller, Monica. 2011. *Paths to Post-Nationalism: A Critical Ethnography of Language and Identity*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Huntington, Samuel. 2005. *Chalish-ha-ye Huviyat dar Amrika* [The Challenges of Identity in America]. Translated by Gulshan Pajuhi, Sa'id Kulahi, and Kardan. Tehran: Mu'assasah-ye Ibrar-e Mu'asir-e Tehran
- Hutchinson, John, and Anthony Smith. 2007. *Melligara 'i* [Nationalism]. Translated by Mustafa Yunusi and 'Ali Murshidi-Zad. Tehran: Pazhuhishkadeh-ye Motaleat-e Rahbordi.
- Iravani Tabrizi, Mohammad Aqa. 2001. "Tarikh-e Mashruteh-ye Iran in 'Abd al-Husayn Zarrinkub (ed.), *Two Treatises on the Iranian Constitutional Revolution*. Tehran: National Documents Organization of Iran.
- Jacobson, Rodolfo. 1971. "Cultural Linguistic Pluralism and Problem of Motivation." *TESOL Quarterly* 5 (4): 265-285.
- Kermani, Nazem al-Islam 1873. *Tarikh-e Bidari-ye Iraniyan* [The History of the Awakening of the Iranians], edited by Mohammad Rida Hasan-Bigi, Tehran: Kushesh.
- Ketabcheh-ye Tanzimat-e Hasaneh-ye Dowlat-e 'Eliyah va Mamalek-e Mahrusah-ye Iran* [Regulations Booklet of the Sublime State and the Protected Lands of Persia] 1873. lithographic print, National Library of Iran Digital Documents Archive, no. 1097209
- Kuhastani Najad, Mas'ud. 2011. *Gozidah-ye Asnad-e Anjuman-ha-ye Iyalati va Vilayati* [Selected Documents of the Provincial and Regional Assemblies], Tehran: Library of the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- Majidi, Musa. 2003. *Tarikcheh va Tahlil-e Ruznama-ha-ye Azarbayjan (1941-2001)* [A Brief History and Analysis of the Newspapers of Azerbaijan (1941-2001)]. Tehran: National Library of Iran.

- Malekzadah, Mehdi. 2008. *Tarikh-e Enqelab-e Mashrutiyyat-e Iran* [History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution], vols. 1-3 (in one volume). Tehran: Sukhan.
- Malesevic, Sinisa, and Mark Hugard. 2007. *Ernest Gellner: Contemporary Social Thought*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Malkam Khan, Mirza. 2013. *Mirza Malkom-Khan va Taghyir-e Khatt* [Mirza Malcam-Khan and the Change of Script]. Tehran: Elmi.
- Mashkoo, Mohammad Javad. 1996. *Farhang-e Furuq-e Islami* [Dictionary of Islamic Sects]. Mashhad: Astan-e Quds Razavi.
- Mashkoo, Mohammad Javad. 1996. *Nazar-i be Tarikh-e Azarbayjan* [A Look at the History of Azerbaijan]. Tehran: Anjuman-e Asar va Mafakhir-e Farhangi.
- Morvarid, Yunes. 1998. *Advar-e Majlis-e Qanungozari dar Dowran-e Mashrutiyyat* [Eras of the Legislative Assembly during the Constitutional Period]. Tehran: Oadi.
- Nahidi Azar, Abd al-Husayn. n.d. *Tarikhcheh-ye Ruznameh-ha-ye Tabriz dar Sadr-e Mashrutiyyat* [A Brief History of the Newspapers of Tabriz in the Early Constitutional Period]. Tehran: Talash.
- Ostadi, Kazem. 1392. *Hokm-e Feqhi-ye Taghyir-e Khat* [The Jurisprudential Ruling on Script Change]. Tehran: Nashr-e elmi.
- Ranjbar Fakhri, Mahmud. 2004. *Namayish dar Tabriz (az Mashruteh ta Nehzat-e Milli-ye Naft)* [Theater in Tabriz (From the Constitutional Period to the National Oil Movement)]. Tehran: Sa3man-e Asnad va Ketabkhaneh-ye Milli-ye Jomhuri-ye Islami.
- Ruhani, Baba-Mardukh. 2003. *Tarikh-e Mashahir-e Kord (Urfa', Ulama', Udaba', Shu'ara')* [History of the Famous Kurds (Mystics, Scholars, Men of Letters, Poets)]. Tehran: Suruu.
- Rustaei, Muhsin. 2006. *Tarikh-e Nakhustin Farhangistan-e Iran beh Revayat-e Asnad* [The History of the First Iranian Academy According to Documents]. Tehran: Ni.
- Sardarinia, Samad. 1984. *Naqsh-e Markaz-e Ghaybi-ye Tabriz dar Inqilab-e Mashrutiyyat* [The Role of the Hidden Center of Tabriz in the Constitutional Revolution]. Tehran: Talash.
- Shafiei Kadkani, Mohammad Reza. 2011. *Advar-e She'r-e Farsi* [Eras of Persian Poetry]. Tehran: Sukhan.
- Spolsky, Bernard. 1998. *Sociolinguistics*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Spolsky, Bernard. 2004. *Language Policy*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Talibof Tabrizi, 'Abd al-Rahim. 1967. *Ketab-e Ahmad (Safineh-ye Talibi)* [The Book of Ahmad (Talibi's Boat)]. Tehran: Nashr-e Kitab-ha-ye Habibi.
- Taravardizadeh, Suhayla. 2006. *Namayeshnameh-Nevisan-e Iran dar Dowreh-yi Enqelab-ie Mashrutiyyat* [Playwrights of Iran during the Constitutional Revolution]. Master's thesis, Islamic Azad University, Tehran Center.
- Wimbus, S. Enders. 1985. *Soviet Nationalities in Strategic Perspective*. London: Croom Helm.
- Yusefi, Farhshid. 2012. *Zendeginamah-ye Bozorgan-e Kermanshah (az Sadeh-ye Avval ta Sizdahum)* [Biographies of the Notables of Kermanshah (from the 1st to the 13th Century)]. Kermanshah: Bagh-e Nei.