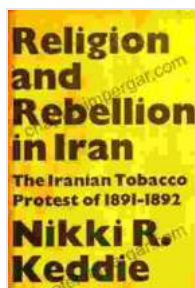


# The Iranian Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892: A Pivotal Moment in Iranian History



## Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Iranian Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892 by Nikki R. Keddie

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

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In the annals of Iranian history, the Iranian Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892 stands as a watershed moment. Sparked by economic grievances and fueled by a burgeoning sense of nationalism, this uprising ignited widespread resistance against foreign influence and laid the groundwork for significant social and political transformations in the years that followed.

This article delves into the fascinating story of the Iranian Tobacco Protest, exploring its causes, key events, and lasting impact on Iranian society. We will trace the rise of anti-tobacco sentiment, the role of religious leaders and intellectuals, and the government's response to the growing unrest.

## Causes of the Protest

The roots of the Iranian Tobacco Protest can be traced to a series of factors that had been simmering for years. One of the most significant grievances

was the granting of a tobacco concession to a British company, the Imperial Tobacco Corporation of Persia, in 1890. This concession gave the British monopoly over the production, sale, and distribution of tobacco in Iran for a period of 50 years.

The concession was widely seen as an infringement on Iran's sovereignty and a threat to its economic independence. Many Iranians feared that the British would exploit the country's resources and profits, leaving little for the Iranian population. Additionally, the concession was seen as a symbol of foreign domination and interference in Iranian affairs.

### **Religious and Intellectual Leadership**

The tobacco concession ignited widespread anger and resentment, and it was met with staunch opposition from various segments of Iranian society. Leading the charge were religious leaders, most notably Grand Ayatollah Mirza Shirazi, who issued a fatwa (religious decree) forbidding the use and trade of tobacco. This fatwa had a profound impact on the Iranian population, as many people saw it as a sacred duty to obey their religious leaders.

Intellectuals and activists also played a significant role in galvanizing opposition to the tobacco concession. Newspapers and publications such as Akhbar-e Nashrieh and Habl al-Matin raised awareness about the issue, denouncing the British concession as a threat to Iran's independence and dignity.

### **Civil Disobedience and Economic Boycott**

As anti-tobacco sentiment grew, Iranians began to engage in civil disobedience and economic boycott. Merchants and traders refused to sell tobacco, and people from all walks of life refrained from smoking. The

boycott had a devastating impact on the British company, which saw its profits plummet.

The government's attempts to suppress the protest were met with widespread defiance. Demonstrations and protests erupted in major cities, and people from different social classes came together to support the anti-tobacco movement.

### **Government Response and Concession Revocation**

Faced with growing unrest and the threat of economic collapse, the Iranian government was forced to reassess its position. Nasir al-Din Shah, the ruling monarch, initially resisted revoking the tobacco concession, but he eventually bowed to public pressure.

In January 1892, the Iranian government officially revoked the tobacco concession, marking a significant victory for the anti-tobacco movement. This concession was a testament to the power of civil disobedience and the determination of the Iranian people to defend their sovereignty.

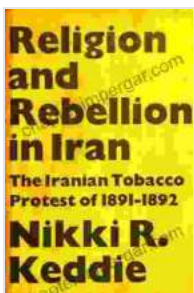
### **Impact and Legacy**

The Iranian Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892 had a profound impact on Iranian history. It marked a turning point in the country's relations with foreign powers and ignited a sense of national consciousness and unity.

The protest also paved the way for constitutional reforms and the establishment of a more representative government. The Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911 was in part inspired by the success of the Tobacco Protest, and it led to the creation of a parliament and other democratic institutions.

The Iranian Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892 stands as a testament to the Iranian people's resilience, determination, and unwavering commitment to their independence and dignity. It demonstrated the power of civil resistance and the importance of unity in overcoming adversity.

The legacy of the Tobacco Protest continues to inspire Iranians today and serves as a reminder of the importance of protecting their sovereignty and preserving their cultural identity.



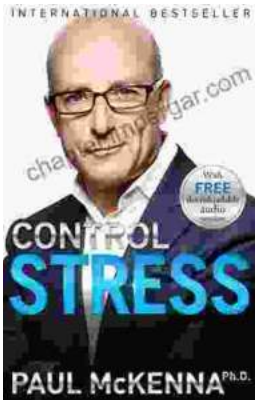
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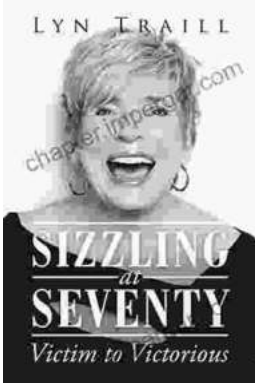
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