



The Quarterly Journal of
The History of Village and Rural Settlement in
Iran and Islam

Online Issn: 3060- 6012

Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 2025



The Practice of Nozl and the Passage of Government Troops: The Impact of Ruling Class Policies on Rural Life in the 9th Century AH (15th Century CE)

Fatemeh Lotfi Emran¹, Maghsoud Ali Sadeghi^{2*}, Seyyed Hashem Aghajari³,
Shahram Yousefi far⁴

¹- Ph.D. Candidate in the History of Islamic Iran, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.

l.fatemeh@modares.ac.ir

^{2*}- Associate Professor, Department of History, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.

m_sadeghi@modares.ac.ir

³- Associate Professor, Department of History, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.

aghajari@modares.ac.ir

⁴- Professor, Department of History, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran. shyousefifar@ut.ac.ir

Article Info

Article type:

Research Article

Received:

29/07/2025

Accepted:

19/09/2025

ABSTRACT

This study examines the impacts of ninth-century AH governmental policies on the lives of Iranian rural communities, focusing on Nozl (mandatory quartering of state officials and diplomatic missions in rural households) and the passage of government troops through rural areas. The research methodology is based on a qualitative approach and historical analysis, involving the collection and thematic analysis of data from primary sources to explore the economic, social, and psychological effects of these practices. Findings indicate that Nozl, rooted in Iranian administrative traditions, became a heavy financial burden on villagers due to ineffective oversight, leading to reduced agricultural production, weakened social cohesion, and eroded trust in governance. Similarly, the passage of troops through rural areas during crises and lapses in supervision often resulted in the plundering of fields and destruction of rural infrastructure. Set in the context of the ninth century AH, this study reveals that these two phenomena collectively undermined the economy and social cohesion of rural communities. The main conclusion emphasizes the inherent tension between the productive role of villages and the financial demands of the state, highlighting the necessity of strengthening administrative oversight to mitigate pressures on villagers and ensure the sustainability of local communities.

Keywords: Nozl, Military Movements, Rural Communities, Timurids, Turkmens.

DOI: 10.30479/hvri.2025.22447.1085



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Publisher: Imam Khomeini International University

Introduction

The 9th century AH (15th CE), a tumultuous era in Iranian history, is marked by waves of power struggles among Timurids, Turkmens, and Uzbeks. Rural communities, as the backbone of agricultural economy and suppliers of financial and military resources to governments, found themselves ensnared in structural tensions. On one hand, efforts were made to revive agriculture and reconstruct infrastructure such as qanats and dams; on the other, policies like the Nozl practice and frequent passage of government troops imposed economic pressures and resource destruction, endangering rural life. This research delves into this contradiction, posing the central question: How did the phenomena of Nozl and the passage of government troops reflect the tension between the traditional Iranian-Islamic ideals of governance justice and the exploitative realities of the ruling class in the 9th century AH? The study's significance lies in illuminating the destructive effects of these policies on rural economies and societies, underscoring villagers' role as victims of short-term military strategies. Primary sources, including Clavijo's accounts of officials' violent treatment of villagers and critiques by thinkers like Kashi and Jami, form the analytical foundation.

Materials & Method

This research adopts a qualitative-historical approach, comprising two main stages: 1) Data collection from primary sources, including chronicles (e.g., *Habib al-Siyar* by Khwandamir, *Zubdat al-Tawarikh* by Hafiz Abru), travelogues (Clavijo's Embassy), administrative munsha'at (Nakhjavani's *Dastur al-Katib*, Marvarid Kermani's *Munsha'at*), and didactic-literary works (Jami's *Haft Awrang*, Kashi's *Akhlaq Muhsini*). These were selected for evidence on Nozl and troop passages. 2) Thematic analysis of data based on key themes: economic (reduced production, destruction of infrastructure), social (cohesion erosion, local resistances), and psychological (insecurity and distrust).

Discussion

The Nozl practice, originating from the Mongol Yam system, evolved into an exploitation tool in the 9th century. Clavijo's report of three-day mandatory quartering for officials and nine days for princes, with free provisioning of food and mounts by village headmen, imposed severe economic burdens on villagers. This, by creating insecurity for the villagers, reduced production and intensified poverty. From a social perspective, the violence of officials, such as the whipping of headmen, eroded trust in local leadership and fueled flight or rebellion, like the Sarbadar movement. The passage of troops,

complementary to *Nazl*, in critical situations such as Timurid military campaigns led to plunder and destruction; for instance, in the event of *Tun*, the refusal to sell grain became a pretext for looting. The critiques by Nakhjavani and Jami concerning the violation of women's privacy and theft during *Nazl*, and Dawlatshah's comparison of the army to locusts, demonstrate the awareness of the elites of these oppressions. However, reformist decrees failed due to weak supervision. These patterns reflect the tension between the ideal of justice and protection of the subjects and the reality of exploitation, and a comparison with the Ilkhanid period, such as the reforms of Ghazan, indicates the continuity of structural problems.

Results and Conclusion

The results of the study demonstrate that during this period, the custom of *Nazl* led to pressure on the peasants and a decrease in agricultural production, while the passage of troops resulted in the destruction of agricultural infrastructure. These policies weakened social cohesion by creating collective fear and forced migration. The final conclusion emphasizes the existence of an inherent and structural tension between the productive function of villages and the financial-military needs of the government. This study not only enriches the social history of medieval Iran by providing a multidimensional analysis (economic, social, psychological) but also offers lessons for contemporary policymaking in protecting local communities from institutional pressures.

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