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Baghdād under Mongol Rule*

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Introduction

The Mongol conquest of Baghdād in 1258 has been commonly considered a major turning point in Islamic history, mainly because it put an end to the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate that had headed the Sunnī Muslim community—spiritually if not always politically—for more than five hundred years. More generally, the Mongol conquest also ended Arab hegemony over major parts of the Muslim world. Eventually, the conquest would acquire mythical dimensions, which resurfaced in the first decade of the current century, when (p.286) it served as a powerful metaphor for the 2003 American occupation of Iraq, often portrayed as a medieval catastrophe. As a result, it has become common wisdom that the devastating Mongol conquest terminated Baghdād’s glory, cut it off from the Arabic-speaking world now led by Cairo and Damascus, and transformed it into a provincial, negligible city. Such it ostensibly remained throughout the Pre-Modern period, under Mongol, Turkmen and Ottoman rule.¹ In contrast, I argue that under Mongol-Ilkhanid rule Baghdād continued to be a striving intellectual center with a viable economy and, furthermore, that this prosperity was not despite Mongol rule but because of it.²

Below I give a short political history of Baghdād from the beginning of the thirteenth century onward, and then focus on the administrative, economic and socio-cultural developments of Ilkhanid Baghdād, highlighting the Mongol impact on each field. But let me begin with some words about the sources.

The Sources

* The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme (FP/2007–13)/ERC Grant Agreement n. 312397. Names of famous Mongols are given in their Mongolian form, i.e. Ghazan or Arghun (instead of Arabicized Ghāzān or Arghūn).

¹ E.g. al-Sarghānī, *Qiṣṣat al-Tatār*; Manṣūr, *Qiṣṣat suqūt Baghdād*; Polk, *Understanding Iraq*; Marozzi, *Baghdad*, 135-160; Krämer, *Mongol Conquest*, 97-116.

² A certain prosperity of the city is attested also by scholars who have formerly studied the Baghdādī sources. See Wu Painan, *Fall of Baghdad*; Gilli-Elevi, *Baghdad*; ‘Azzāwī, *Ta’rīkh*.

The main sources for the study of Ilkhanid Baghdād include the chronicle *Al-ḥawādith al-jāmi‘a li-l-mi‘a al-sābi‘a* (The Collected Events [and Useful Experiences] that Occurred in the Seventh [i. e. 13th] Century), also known as *Kitāb al-ḥawādith* (The Book of Events), the extant part of which records Baghdādī history from 1228-1300. Previously, this work was ascribed to Ibn al-Fuwaṭī (1244-1323), the greatest contemporaneous Baghdādī historian, but now it is considered anonymous.³ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī’s only surviving work, the biographical dictionary *Talkhīs majma‘ al-ādāb fi mu‘jam al-aqāb* (The Abridgement of the Collected Literatures: The Dictionary of Nicknames), is by far *the* major source for Ilkhanid Baghdād. Even though the work survived only in an abbreviated and fragmentary form,⁴ it is of tremendous historical value. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, a native of Baghdād, experienced its fall and was taken captive in 1258. A few years later, he was bought and released by Nasīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274), Hülegü’s advisor and a noted polymath. After a career as a librarian in the (p.287) Marāgha Observatory, he returned to Baghdād in 1280 or 1281, where he served as the librarian of the Mustanṣiriyya Madrasa for more than two decades. Hence, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī had access to the best libraries of his time, and personally knew many of the people—jurists, officials, astronomers, painters, merchants, Ṣūfīs—whom he had included in his dictionary. The book is a treasure mine for the Ilkhanate’s social, cultural and intellectual history, documenting Baghdād’s thriving scholarly community and various cultural encounters between the Mongols and their subjects—Muslims, Jews and Christians.⁵ In addition, the main Ilkhanid sources, notably the *Jāmi‘ al-tawārīkh* (The Compendium of Chronicles) of Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 1318), the *Ta’rīkh-i Uljaytū* (The History of Öljeitü) of al-Qāshānī (fl. 1304-1316), Wassāf’s history written ca. 1323, the works of Mustawfī Qazwīnī (d. ca. 1344)—especially the geographical part of *Nuzhat al-qulūb* (The Hearts’ Joy)—as well as the Syriac and Arabic chronographies of the bishop and polymath known as Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286), contain bits and pieces of useful information. The voluminous Mamluk sources, written in Egypt and Syria, also hold an impressive amount of information about Baghdādī personalities, including a full book devoted exclusively to Baghdādī scholars.⁶ The mere existence of such ample information strongly suggests that Baghdād remained closely connected to other parts of the Arab world, even during the

³ See, e.g., the editors’ introduction: Anonymous, *Kitāb al-Ḥawādith*, 7-10.

⁴ The surviving part includes only the letters ‘ayn through mīm. It is available in a six-volume edition, including index; see Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma‘*.

⁴ DeWeese, *Cultural Transmission*, 11-29.

⁶ Ibn Rāfi‘, *Ta’rīkh/Muntakhab*. For more on Mamluk sources on the Mongols, see Amitai/Biran, *Arabic Sources*.

Ilkhanid–Mamluk rivalry in 1260-1323. The 1258 conquest of Baghdād was recorded in a myriad of sources—not necessarily historical ones—and even in Chinese ones.⁷

In addition, several visitors, notably the Dominican monk Riccoldo da Montecroce (d. 1320) and the Muslim traveler Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. ca. 1377) provided detailed descriptions of Baghdād in 1300 and 1327 respectively. Marco Polo (d. 1324) also left a short record of the city, that he might have visited on his return journey from China in the early 1290s.⁸ Contemporaneous local works—geographic, scientific, religious and artistic—certainly add to our understanding of the city’s life. However, the quantity of sources is still limited in comparison with the rich historiography that documented ‘Abbāsīd Baghdād. Moreover, our sources are especially scarce for one of the city’s most flourishing periods—that of the last Ilkhan, Abū Sa‘īd (r. 1316-1335)—and this contributes to creating the impression of the city’s decline.

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Political History

The Baghdād into which Hülegü’s troops penetrated in the 1250s was quite different from the city in its heyday under the early ‘Abbāsīds. While the caliph remained a symbol of Islamic unity, his actual power was limited to the region called “Arabs’ Iraq” (*‘Irāq al-‘Arab*, roughly modern central and southern Iraq), and from the tenth century onwards he had to share his rule first with the Būyids (945-1055) and then with the Seljuqs (1055-1150s).⁹ The traveler from the Iberian Peninsula Ibn Jubayr (d. 1217), who visited the city in 1184, described it as an intellectual wasteland, a description later copied by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa and ascribed to Ilkhanid Baghdād.¹⁰ After the Seljuqs’ loss of power, the Caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh (r. 1185-1225) tried to revive the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, restoring its army as well as its religious and secular prestige. His grandson, al-Mustaṣṣir (r. 1226-1242), is famed mainly for his building activities, including that of the Mustaṣṣiriyya Madrasa, opened in 1234, which became Baghdād’s main intellectual center, retaining this position also under Mongol rule.¹¹ These two able caliphs succeeded in bolstering the caliphate’s symbolic position, and served as arbitrators among various petty Muslim rulers, but they were unable to unite the Muslim world behind them or even to extend the territory under

⁷ Li Yu, *Xishiji*. Tr. Bretschneider; Song Lian, *Yuan shi*, 3:47, 149:3524; see also Hodous, *Guo Kan*.

⁸ For Riccoldo’s text, see George-Tvrtković, *Christian Pilgrim*, 175-228; Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Tuḥfat*. Tr. DeFrémery/Sanguinetti, II, 125-127; Tr. Gibb, II, 342-344; Polo, *The Book*, I, 63-73.

⁹ For these two dynasties, see the chapters by Nuha Alshaar and Venassa van Renterghem in this volume.

¹⁰ For Ibn Jubayr’s description, see Cooperson, *Baghdad*, 99.

¹¹ For more on Baghdād as intellectual center, see the chapters by Sebastian Günther and Damien Janos in this volume.

their direct control beyond Iraq. This was partly due to the continuous menace from the East throughout the thirteenth century, first from the Khwārazm Shāhs¹² and then the Mongols.

Tekesh Khwārazm Shāh (r. 1172-1200), who had helped al-Nāṣir in his struggle against the Seljuqs, took over most of the Seljuqs' territories, and saw himself as eligible to succeed their position vis-à-vis the caliphate. His son and heir, Muḥammad (r. 1200-1220), enraged by the caliph's refusal to acknowledge the Khwārazm Shāhs as the new sultans, threatened to replace the 'Abbāsids with 'Alīds, thus questioning 'Abbāsid legitimacy. In 1217 Muḥammad brought a huge army to attack Baghdād, retreating only due to the harsh winter. (p. 289) The Khwārazmian menace might have encouraged al-Nāṣir to ally with the Mongols, but even if his role in inviting the Mongols into the Muslim world is merely Khwārazmian propaganda, from the 1220s the Mongols became a constant presence in 'Irāqī life. Fugitives from the attacks of Chinggis Khan (r. 1206-1227) on Transoxania and Khwārazm (1219-1225) arrived in Baghdād, reporting the unprecedented catastrophe. Al-Nāṣir began to arrange a Muslim force—comprised of troops from Mosul, Baghdād and Irbil; the Ayyūbids in Syria and Egypt refused to join in—but an attack on Iraq was averted when Chinggis Khan's troops returned to Mongolia.

The Khwārazmian menace, however, did not end: Muḥammad's son, Jalāl al-Dīn Mingbirnī (r. 1220-1231), the last Khwārazm Shāh, advanced towards Baghdād, escaping from the Mongols and wreaking no less havoc than they did. In early 1225, his army vanquished the caliphal vanguard, but he settled in Ba'qūbā, some 43 kilometers north of Baghdād, and after a few months, aware of his inability to take the fortified city, retreated to Azerbaijan. The Mongols soon arrived to pursue him, once again coming dangerously close to Iraq. The 1230s saw several skirmishes between the Mongols and caliphal troops, mainly in the region of Irbil. Although these never developed into a full-scale conflict—by the time the caliphal troops arrived, the Mongols had already left—the constant threat cast a heavy shadow on al-Mustanṣir's reign, and often led to the suspension of the 'Irāqī pilgrimage (*hajj*) caravan.

¹² The Khwārazm Shāhs (1077-1231), a Turkic dynasty whose center was in the Khwārazm region on the Oxus Delta (modern north Uzbekistan) began as vassals of the Seljuqs and the Qara Khitai. In the late 12th-early 13th century, the Khwārazm shāhs became independent and greatly increased their territory and power at the expense of their former overlords. They were crushed by Chinggis Khan's troops in the 1220s and their last ruler Jalāl al-Dīn (r. 1220-1231), the only Muslim ruler who effectively opposed the Mongols, was murdered in 1231.

Things became worse under al-Mustaʿşir’s heir, the last ʿAbbāsīd caliph, al-Mustaʿşim bi-llāh (r. 1242-1258). Al-Mustaʿşim is usually considered an ineffective ruler, but he certainly had serious challenges to cope with. Apart from the Mongol menace described below, throughout his reign the city suffered numerous disasters, including repeated floods (in 1243, 1247, 1248, 1253, 1255 and the worst of all in 1256). These damaged the city’s neighborhoods, harmed the economy and encouraged social unrest, including violent sectarian struggles between Sunnīs and Shīʿīs, Ḥanbalīs and Shāfiʿīs, as well as disorder from gangs of young men (*ʿayyārūn*). Moreover, in the mid-1250s the army did not receive its pay and the hungry soldiers threatened the citizens and were none too eager to fight.

Fighting, however, became unavoidable: larger numbers of Mongol troops arrived in the Middle East already in 1243, defeating the Rūm Seljuqs at Köse Dağ (in Anatolia), and leaving a permanent garrison there under the general Baiju. Even beforehand, the Mongols had renewed their attacks on the cities of the Jazīra, wreaking havoc and sending messengers to the caliph. Desertions to and from the Mongol camps had already begun at this stage, and accelerated after another attack in 1245. Against this background, and like other rulers in the Jazīra and Syria, the caliph also sent an embassy to the Mongol (p. 290) capital Qaraqorum, in modern central Mongolia. His emissaries were also present at the coronation of the Mongol Great Khan Güyük (r. 1246-1248) in 1246, and were in Qaraqorum again in 1254, when the Franciscan missionary William of Rubruck met them near the court of the Great Khan Möngke (r. 1251-1259). The Mongols understood these caliphal moves as expressing submission. Therefore, when Möngke sent his brother, Hülegü, to the Middle East against the Nizārī-Ismāʿīlīs, the Mongols asked the caliph to join in the attack, but al-Mustaʿşim refused.

Hülegü left Mongolia in 1253, defeated the Nizārī-Ismāʿīlīs at Alamūt in 1256 and continued towards Baghdād. After resting his troops in Iran during spring and summer 1257, in the fall he demanded the caliph’s surrender. The bone of contention was the caliph’s refusal to provide troops for the Mongols’ attack on Alamūt, although the caliphate’s pretensions of universal rule also surely grated on the Mongols. Halfhearted negotiations did nothing to improve matters, partly due to the fragmented situation at the caliphal court—with the Shīʿī vizier Ibn al-ʿAlqamī (d. 1258) allegedly in secret communication with the Mongols. During the acrimonious diplomatic exchange, the caliph made nearly all possible mistakes—denigrating Hülegü, sending inadequate gifts

and refusing to meet the Mongols, assuring himself that no one would dare to attack Baghdād. According to Rashīd al-Dīn's famous story, Hülegü was indeed a bit reluctant to assault the enduring caliphate, especially after being warned by his Sunnī astrologer Ḥusām al-Dīn (d. 1259). After getting the approval of his Shī'ī astronomer Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274), however, he stopped hesitating. At the very beginning of 1258 Hülegü and his multi-ethnic armies—including Chinese siege breakers, Armenian and Georgian auxiliaries and quite a few Sunnī Muslim troops from Central Asia, Iran and Iraq—converged on Baghdād from all sides. Fighting began in earnest in mid-January, and the city was taken on February 10, 1258, when the caliph left the city and surrendered to Hülegü. The caliph and most of his family were executed soon afterwards. Thus ended 'Abbāsīd rule in Bagdad, which had lasted for more than half a millennium.

The sack of Baghdād involved looting, killing and devastation on a grand scale. Yet, it was not an outburst of barbarism, but a meticulously organized campaign of a well-organized and disciplined army under excellent command. The violence, therefore, was either applied or ceased in accordance with Hülegü's orders. While the estimates of the victims run from the tens of thousands to millions (the last estimate vastly inflated), and were augmented by epidemics,¹³ quite a few groups and individuals managed to survive the (p. 291) conquest thanks to a combination of submission, payment and the possession of special skills. Thus, safe conducts (*amāns*) were granted to the city's Christians and Jews, the Shī'īs from al-Ḥilla (a city some 100 km south of Baghdād), the merchants from Khurāsān and local dignitaries who had been in contact with the Mongols before 1258, as well as to useful and talented people, (p. 292) including many of the luminaries of the 'Abbāsīd court in fields such as music, calligraphy, alchemy, craftsmanship and administration.¹⁴

Furthermore, Baghdād's restoration began as soon as the sack ended. Even before leaving for Syria in early 1258, Hülegü ordered the rebuilding of the city and reopened the bazaars. He certainly strove to revive the city's stability, retaining much of the 'Abbāsīd bureaucracy intact—including the vizier, the chief financial administrator (*ṣāhib al-dīwān*) and the chief judge (*qādī al-quḍāt*)—and choosing a Muslim Mongol, 'Alī Bahādur, as his governor (*shihna*), and another Iranian Muslim as the latter's viceroy

¹³ Monica Green recently claimed that the epidemic reported in Baghdād during the conquest (notably by the anonymous *Akḥbār-i Muḡhūlān*. Ed. Afshār, 32; Tr. Lane, 60-61), was actually an early occurrence of the plague, brought by the Mongol army (see Green, *Four Black Deaths*; Fancy/Green, *Fall of Baghdad*).

¹⁴ Biran, *Violence*, 15-31.

(*nā'ib*). Hülegü also assigned a contingent of 3000 soldiers and a special levy of villagers to cope with the restoration's grisly first measures—such as burying corpses and evacuating debris—while he himself continued towards al-Jazīra and Syria.

After the defeat of Hülegü's troops in 'Ayn Jālūt (in northern Palestine) in 1260 by the rising Mamluk Sultanate, two lesser 'Abbāsīd princes who escaped to Syria made futile attempts to recapture Baghdād with a certain amount of Mamluk support. In December 1260, the 'Abbāsīd prince Aḥmad b. Ḥasan, great-great-grandson of Caliph al-Mustarshīd (r. 1118-1135), who was enthroned by the Mamluk Sultan Quṭuz (d. 1260) as Caliph al-Ḥākim (r. 1262-1302), defeated a small Mongol force in the environs of Baghdād but retreated to Syria when a larger Mongol contingent approached. In 1261, another 'Abbāsīd prince, Aḥmad b. al-Zāhir, formally enthroned in Cairo by Quṭuz's successor Baybars (r. 1260-1277) as Caliph al-Mustanṣir (r. 1261), also went to war (*jihād*) against the infidel Mongols. Joined by al-Ḥākim, Bedouins and Turkmens, his small force was quickly repulsed by the Mongols' Baghdādī troops, who set aside their former-'Abbāsīd component, in order not to test the latter's loyalty. Al-Mustanṣir's defeat paved al-Ḥākim's way back to the caliphate. The puppet 'Abbāsīd Caliphate in Cairo survived until the Ottoman conquest in 1517, but the caliphs never challenged Baghdād again. In 1263 or 1264, a former 'Abbāsīd commander who had joined Hülegü's army received the latter's permission to assemble the remnants of the 'Abbāsīd troops scattered in Iraq. When the Mongols discovered that he actually intended to desert with them to the Mamluks, however, they annihilated a considerable number of the conspirators. While accusations of connections with the Mamluks continued to be leveled against Ilkhanid officials in Baghdād throughout the period of Mongol–Mamluk rivalry (1260-1323), Ilkhanid rule in Baghdād was never disputed again. Already in 1271 lesser 'Abbāsīd family members, including women, were allowed to return to Baghdād (though not the surviving son of the caliph, who remained in Marāgha, becoming a renowned *ḥadīth* scholar).

(p. 293) Nevertheless, these futile 'Abbāsīd attempts did not interrupt the city's restoration that, according to contemporaneous observers, was quick and effective. The city's madrasas reopened less than two years after the conquest; major buildings, such as the Mosques of the Caliph and the Shī'ī Kāzīmāyn Shrines, were reconstructed, and trade encouraged. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī even claims that already by 1262 “the glory of Islām came back to the City of Peace”.¹⁵ The reconstruction continued throughout the reign of Hülegü's son

¹⁵ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, II, 125-126.

and heir, Abaqa (r. 1265-1282). Much of the credit for this is given to the Mongols' Muslim appointees, notably to the historian 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Juwaynī, whose long tenure as Baghdād's governor (1259-1283)—while not devoid of turbulence, factional struggle and threats on his life—brought stability and prosperity to the city. Al-Juwaynī, who replaced Ibn al-'Alqamī's son and heir, descended from a notable family, whose members had served in the 'Abbāsīd, Seljuq and the Khwārazmian administration for centuries. Al-Juwaynī's father had joined the Mongols already in the 1230s. His son began his career in Mongol administration in his native Khurāsān, joining Hülegü's troops when they reached the province in 1256, and accompanying them on the campaigns against Alamūt and Baghdād. Following his appointment in 1259, al-Juwaynī did much to improve the city's lot, securing its stability through harsh measures against any form of heterodoxy (e.g. false prophets). His effective reconstruction activities, which included fiscal and administrative measures, and also encompassed the rural regions outside Baghdād, helped him to gain the support of the Baghdādī population, as did his patronage of scholars and his marriage to Shams al-Duhā, the widow of al-Musta'şim's son, who became famous for establishing the 'Işmātiyya Madrasa in Baghdād. Al-Juwaynī enjoyed good relations with his superior during Abaqa's time—the Mongol governor of Iraq and Fārs, Amīr Sugunjaq—and worked in close cooperation with his brother, Shams al-Dīn al-Juwaynī, who served as Hülegü's and Abaqa's chief administrator (*şāhib al-dīwān*, a title sometimes also denoting 'Alā' al-Dīn). Chroniclers even said that he restored Iraq to a prosperity greater than that it had enjoyed under the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate.

Abaqa visited Baghdād three times, in 1269, 1273 and 1282. In 1273, he conferred the western Baghdādī suburb of al-Muḥawwal upon his (and later his son, Arghun's) wife Bulughan Khātūn (d. 1286), and future Ilkhans often resided there during their visits to the city. From 1279, however, the economic situation of the Ilkhanate in general worsened, and Abaqa therefore resorted to demanding irregular levies from the city's dwellers through his governor. His last visit to the city, following the Ilkhanid defeat in the battle of Ḥimş against the Mamluks (in 1281), led to the harassment of the city and its hinterlands (p. 295) by the retreating army. It was during this last visit that al-Juwaynī's rivals orchestrated his deposition, accusing him of embezzlement and of ties with the Mamluks. He was restored to power during the short reign of Abaqa's successor and the first Muslim Ilkhan, Aḥmad Tegüder (r. 1282-1284), but died soon afterwards, being replaced in 1283 by his nephew, Hārūn b. Shams al-Dīn (d. 1286), a renowned scholar and

patron, also married to an ‘Abbāsīd princess. Already in the winter of 1282-1283, however, Aḥmad’s nephew and nemesis, Prince Arghun, who was stationed near Baghdād, visited the city and—reviving the accusations of embezzlement against al-Juwaynī—demanded that the Baghdādī population raise the missing revenues. When Arghun (r. 1284-1291) deposed Aḥmad Tegüder and became Ilkhan, one of his first acts was a brutal purge of the entire al-Juwaynī family.

The period between the fall of the Juwaynīs and Ghazan’s rise to power, i.e. the years 1284-1295, was a tough time for Baghdād, as it was for other Ilkhanid provinces. A combination of natural and man-made disasters—bad harvests, famines and epidemics as well as unfortunate experiments with currency, forced levies, rapid succession of chief administrators, factional strife and political struggles—greatly harmed the city’s economy. By then, Baghdād was governed first by Aruq, a Mongol and the brother of Arghun’s vizier Buqa (d. 1289), and, after his execution, by the Jew Sa’d al-Dawla (d. 1291) and later his brother Fakhr al-Dawla. One of the eccentric occurrences of this period, related to Arghun’s extensive connections with Western Europe, was the attempt to build a navy in Baghdād with Genoese help. Around 900 Genoese arrived in the city for the enterprise, which was meant to compete with the Mamluks for the Indian Ocean trade. They spent the winter of 1289-1290 in the city, building two ships. Soon afterwards, however, as the Genoese resumed their alliance with the Mamluks and abandoned the project, the sailors split into factions and slaughtered each other. Whether the Genoese incident contributed to the opposition to the Jewish administrators is unclear, but as soon as their patron, Ilkhan Arghun, was on his deathbed, the efficient tax collectors were executed together with their cooperative Mongol governor (*shihna*). This was followed by a pogrom against the entire Baghdādī Jewish community and their Muslim collaborators.

The reign of the next Ilkhan, Arghun’s brother Geikhatu (1291-1295), is infamous for the failed attempt to employ Chinese-style paper money (*chao*) throughout the Mongol Empire. The experiment was abolished before it reached Baghdād, but rumors certainly haunted the city. Even before that, the deteriorating economic situation triggered Bedouin incursions. Geikhatu ordered his cousin Prince Baidu, who had been stationed near the city since 1284, to quell them, but the latter ended up pillaging the Baghdādī countryside (p. 296) and the local merchants. Soon after the *chao* debacle, in early 1295, Baidu deposed his cousin, killing Geikhatu’s governor in Baghdād (who had protested against the prince’s atrocities) and bringing a host of ‘Irāqīs to his short-lived

central government. A few months afterwards, however, Baidu himself was overthrown by Arghun's son Ghazan (r. 1295-1304).

With Ghazan's reign Baghdād's situation improved. First, the Islamization of the Ilkhanate under Ghazan brought about a considerable rise in the city's prestige. Second, from this period onwards, Baghdād became a more popular winter pasture for the nomadic Mongol court, and Ghazan and his heirs spent quite a few winters there, bringing with them the whole camp (*ordo*) with its courtiers, merchants and scholars, all of whom contributed to the city's economic and cultural prosperity as much as to its political stature. Third, like other parts of the Ilkhanate, Baghdād benefitted from Ghazan's economic reforms. Among other things, he reformed the city's coinage, dug canals in its hinterland and appointed a capable governor, Adīna, who remained in office for more than a decade (1297-1309), winning praise for the prosperity he brought to the city. Ghazan's wife, Bulughan Khatun al-Khurāsāniyya, built a suburb called Khurāsān outside the city. Moreover, Ghazan's exceptional albeit short-lived success in the war against the Mamluks in 1299—which was apparently achieved without exhausting Baghdād's resources—brought back quite a few former emigrants.

Baghdād continued to flourish under Ghazan's successors Öljeitü (r. 1304-1316) and Abū Sa'īd (r. 1316-1335). Under Öljeitü, who visited Baghdād seven times during his twelve years in office, the city was described by Ibn al-Fuwaṭī as "heaven on earth",¹⁶ despite a certain tension between Sunnīs and Shī'īs following Öljeitü's short-lived embrace of Twelver Shī'ism. Under Ilkhan Abū Sa'īd the city was affected by several natural disasters—drought in 1318 and flood in 1325. This, however, was partly compensated for by the improvement in Mamluk–Ilkhanid relations, which culminated in the peace agreement of 1323. The agreement was highly beneficial for the city, which maintained commercial and scholarly connections with the sultanate in Cairo even at times of war.

The fall of the Ilkhanate after Abu Sa'īd's death without heirs in 1335-1336 opened a period of bitter succession struggles, a rapid turnover of obscure Chinggisids each backed by a particular commander, and the dissolution of the realm. Baghdād was first the center of the Oyrats,¹⁷ whose leader, 'Alī Pādshāh, enthroned a grandson of Baidu as an ephemeral Khan. Yet, the city was soon (p. 297) taken by Ḥasan-i Buzurg Jalāyirī

¹⁶ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, II, 433.

¹⁷ The Oyrats were a Mongol tribe who provided the Ilkhanate with a significant number of warriors. On them, see Landa, *Oirats*.

(r. 1336-1356), another Mongol commander. Baghdād remained under the rule of the Jalāyirids (1340-1432) and was famed for its artistic and cultural production until the invasions of Tamerlane in 1393 and 1401, both of which wreaked havoc on the city and weakened its rulers. In 1412, Baghdād fell to the Turkmen Qara Qoyunlu (1351-1469), who further devastated it, and its decline is documented in the same Mamluk historiographical works that formerly recorded its academic splendor.¹⁸

The Administration

With the Mongol conquest, Baghdād lost its status as the ‘Abbāsīd capital and the nominal center of the Muslim world. However, the Ilkhanid province of Baghdād, roughly equivalent to *‘Iraq al-‘Arab* (central and southern Iraq)—sometimes with additions such as Khūzistān or Tustar—was quite similar to the pre-Mongol ‘Abbāsīd realm. Namely, Baghdād remained the ‘Irāqī capital, albeit without a royal court with its prestige and patronage, but with the occasional—and by the late Ilkhanid period rather frequent—presence of the mobile Ilkhanid court, the *ordo*.

Moreover, Mongol administration in Baghdād mirrored the central Ilkhanid government in its dual and complex character. The Mongols divided authority between a Mongol governor, usually called a *shihna*,¹⁹ who was responsible for the Mongol and nomadic population, and a mainly civil administrator, such as a vizier or *ṣāhib al-dīwān* (chief financial administrator), who was usually a *Tajik*, i.e. an Arab or an Iranian Muslim (though the Mongol Aruq and the Jewish Sa‘d al-Dawla also held this post), and was responsible for the sedentary population.²⁰ The first officials appointed by Hülegü, who, like the ‘Abbāsīds, employed both vizier and *ṣāhib al-dīwān*, were local Baghdādīs who had held these posts under the caliph. Soon afterwards, however, they were replaced by Iranians such as al-Juwaynī and his rival Qazwīnī. While most of the civil appointees were Muslims, Christians, Jews and Mongols of unknown religion also took part in the administration, and Jews even reached the highest echelons under Arghun.

(p. 298) Both the terminology and the exact division of authority among the city’s various functionaries is far from clear, and had much to do with the administrators’

¹⁸ See Wing, *Jalayirids*, passim.

¹⁹ In continuation of the Seljuq and Qara Khitai terminology; the Mongol equivalent is *darughachi*.

²⁰ The *shihna* and vizier are usually rendered as dealing with military and civil affairs respectively. This, as explained below, is inaccurate, as civil and military functions were often blurred by the Mongols. Apparently the *shihna* was responsible for the Mongol and nomadic population and the vizier for the sedentary one.

personal stature and their connections to the center. Under the first Ilkhans, both local administrators were subordinated to the governor or commander of Iraq, whose authority sometimes encompassed also other provinces. Yet, at least from 1284 onwards, the governor (*shihna*) of Baghdād was also appointed over the whole of Iraq, though the differentiation might have been restored under Ghazan. The governor often had a viceroy titled *nöker* or *nā'ib*, either Mongol or Tajik, who helped him balance the power of the civil administrators.

The governor, who also had civil responsibilities (on which see below), had a certain military contingent at his disposal, which he employed to establish order against Bedouins and rebels. Whether this force was part of the *tūmen* (allegedly a unit of 10,000 soldiers) of Baghdād mentioned under Öljeitü, or of the Baghdādī army that joined Ghazan's troops against the Mamluks in 1299, is hard to determine. In addition, up to Ghazan's reign, the region of Baghdād was the residence of a Mongol prince and his troops: Abaqa and Arghun before their accession, and Baidu in 1284-1295. On at least two occasions (Arghun in 1283; Baidu in 1294) these princely troops intervened in the city.

The chief financial administrator (*sāhib al-dīwān*) also had a police force (*shurṭa*), used for maintaining public order, a unit of body guards (*sarhangiyya*) and, in emergencies, he could also employ a specific military contingent known as the *kaljiya*, probably composed of Mongol troops. The chief financial administrator certainly had the power and authority to imprison, torture and execute criminals or people who threatened the public order. His main function, however, was dealing with taxation—both the regular taxes and the not-so-rare irregular imposts—as well as rebuilding and later maintaining the city, coping with natural and man-made disasters (e.g. fires). He was also responsible for securing the 'Irāqī pilgrimage caravan and, at least under al-Juwaynī, took care of Baghdād's rural hinterland, repairing irrigation systems, building villages and towns, and also being involved in the affairs of other 'Irāqī towns such as Wāsiṭ or Baṣra. The chief financial administrator employed a rather complex bureaucracy, composed of a host of scribes (*kātibs*), financial officials (*mutaṣariffūn*), an inspector of the markets (*muhtaṣib*) and other inspectors (*mushrifūn*). Occasionally he also appointed a viceroy (*nā'ib*).

Also important for the city's functioning was the religious bureaucracy, headed by the inspector of the endowments (*nāzir al-awqāf*) and the *qādī*, the Muslim judge. The inspector of the endowments shared with the chief financial administrator the responsibility for—and the cost of—the city's restoration and the appointment of the

various madrasas' lecturers. He also paid (p. 299) salaries to Baghdād's scholarly communities: lecturers, students and librarians. Appointed from the center, either by the inspector of all the Ilkhanate's endowments or by the Ilkhan himself, the post was often held by figures of impressive scholarly stature, such as Şafī al-Dīn al-Urmawī (d. 1294) or Naşīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and his descendants (up to the 1320s).

The *qāḍīs* were either appointed by the chief financial administrator—often on the basis of recommendations of former judges—or chosen by the Ilkhan himself. They were often simultaneously employed as *muhtaşibs* and/or lecturers in the various madrasas. Usually the *qāḍī* of western Baghdād was in turn promoted to the position of chief judge of the city, who resided in the city's more populated eastern side.

In addition, purely Mongolian institutions, the presence of which is merely hinted at in the sources, also existed in the city. Thus, we hear about the Mongol court of justice (*yarghu*), the judges of which included not only Mongol commanders but also Iranian officials such as al-Juwaynī and al-Ṭūsī. This seems to have been an ad-hoc court, judging mainly cases of administrative misconduct, perhaps similar to the inspection committees sent from the Mongol itinerant capital whenever it suspected corruption. The governor might have had a certain juridical authority, since in 1266 Tūkāl Bakhshī interfered in an adultery case of a Muslim he employed.²¹ Whether this means that Mongol law (the so-called *Yāsā*) was also practiced in Ilkhanid Baghdād is difficult to ascertain.

The governor also led the merchants who traded with capital provided by Mongol princes or commanders (*ortaq*).²² He might have also been responsible for the imperial workshops that existed in Baghdād, at least for textiles and painting. In 1258 Hülegü appointed an inspector of the artisans, but it is unclear whether this post continued to be manned, or—like the census conducted in 1258—was later abolished. For collecting the trade tax (*tamgha*), a special custodian (*‘amīd al-tamaghāt*) was employed whose role

²¹ Anonymous, *Al-ḥawādith*, 392-393.

²² Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi‘*. Ed. Karimi, II, 714-715; Tr. Thackston, III, 499.

was to place the seal on merchandise for which tax had been paid. The Mongols' postal system existed in Baghdād and had its own stables there, as well. The administration in Baghdād was closely connected to the Ilkhanate central administration, which generally followed the itinerant court and which was sometimes found at Tabriz or at Sulṭāniyya in Azerbaijan. The chief financial administrators of Baghdād were often relatives of the heads of the Ilkhanate administration—this was the case with the al-Juwaynī brothers, with Buqa and Aruq, the Mongol vizier and administrator under Arghun, and, also under Arghun, with Sa'd al-Dawla and his brothers Muhadhdhab al-Dawla and Fakhr al-Dawla, who (p. 300) succeeded Sa'd in Iraq. Moreover, a post in the Baghdādī administration could be a springboard towards a career in the Ilkhanid court: Sa'd al-Dawla began his career in Baghdād and was then promoted to be the Ilkhanate's chief vizier, as was the case with Jamāl al-Dīn Dastgirdānī (d. 1297) afterwards. This close connection also meant that the local administrators (both Tajiks and Mongols) were quite vulnerable to a change in rulers, which often resulted in dismissal or execution. In addition, factional struggles occurred within the Baghdādī administration, and not only—or mainly—along ethnic and religious lines. Certainly there was often tension between governors and viziers, but the main opposition to al-Juwaynī, for example, came from his fellow Muslims, often along the lines of the Qazwīnī–Khurāsānī rivalry. The civil administrators were frequently accused of embezzlement or—until the early fourteenth century—of conducting too close relations with the rival Mamluk Sultanate. Yet, when factional strife was balanced, and the governor and chief financial administrator cooperated, this complex administration functioned reasonably well.

The Economy

Baghdād started the Ilkhanid period in chaos and decline, not only due to the violent conquest but also amid the multitude of natural disasters of the 1240s and 1250s. Yet, despite the often-cited laments of post-Mongol devastation, a closer reading of the contemporaneous sources highlights the quick and successful restoration and thriving trade, both of which began already under Hülegü. Indeed, already by 1258 the city’s mint issued gold and silver coins bearing the names of Möngke and Hülegü. The restoration, led by Ilkhanid officials—notably ‘Imād al-Dīn Qazwīnī (d. 1262) and his rival and successor al-Juwaynī (d. 1283)—included the rebuilding of the city’s main public monuments, as well as madrasas, mosques, shrines and hospices (*ribāṭs*), restoring also some of the Pre-Mongol damage. As mentioned above, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī claimed that already in 1262 the city had returned to its former glory. While this may be exaggerated, the evidence of visitors from the 1290s, such as Marco Polo or Riccoldo da Montecroce, as well as the many indications of a thriving cultural life (described below), confirm this impression.

The revival was facilitated by the relatively few natural disasters that affected the city dwellers in this period—mainly floods in 1277, 1284 and 1325. At least in the first case, the local administration was able to handle the situation, as al-Juwaynī led the city population in a joint effort to repair the dams. While it is common to ascribe these achievements only to the Mongols’ Muslim officials, the fact that the Baghdādī chronicle describes Hülegü’s successor, Ilkhan (p. 301) Abaqa, as “a just ruler who cherished the building of cities”,²³ suggests that the local population was aware of the role of the Mongols themselves, and not only the officials they had appointed, in the restoration process.

The Mongols and their administrators were active in promoting trade and agriculture. Trade played a major role in the city’s economy. Contrary to Bernard Lewis’s famous assertion that after the Mongol conquest the trade routes shifted from Iraq either northward to Tabriz and Anatolia or southwards to Cairo and Damascus, leaving Iraq desolate,²⁴ a careful reading of the sources attests that Baghdād remained a major trading center that benefited from the Ilkhanate’s cosmopolitanism. Although a road by-passing Baghdād and going directly from the Persian Gulf ports to the Ilkhanid centers at Azerbaijan did exist—and flourished—under Mongol rule, considerable quantities of the

²³ Anonymous, *Al-ḥawādith*, 453.

²⁴ Lewis, *Mongols*, 54.

Indian Ocean goods—mainly from India and China—that reached either Fārs or Aden were transferred to Iran and Azerbaijan via Baṣra and Baghdād. This was not least due to Baghdād’s position as a winter pasture of the Ilkhans, and its being the home of the Ṭībī family,²⁵ who led the Gulf trade in the late thirteenth century. Both al-Juwaynī in the 1270s and Ghazan in the 1290s invested in improving the Baghdād–Baṣra connection and waterways: al-Juwaynī founded a new city, called Maʿman, along the Jaʿfar canal in the Wāsiṭ district, which became a center for merchants coming to and from Baṣra. Arghun’s (futile) experiment with Genoese ship-building might also have been initiated to shift some of the Red Sea trade into the Persian Gulf and Baṣra; and the canals built by Ghazan also improved ships’ access up to Baghdād. Both Marco Polo (d. 1324) and the Venetian geographer and statesman Marin Sanudo (d. 1338) attested to Baghdād’s importance to maritime trade.

Moreover, as recently shown by Yokkaichi,²⁶ the maritime trade of both the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea was incorporated into the same multilateral trade network that combined maritime and continental routes and reached into China, South East Asia, India and Europe. In this trade network, the merchants of Kīsh and Hormuz, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, and their intermediaries of Fārs and Iraq, played a major role. Furthermore, Baghdād remained a major station along the continental routes: it had a leading role in the Ilkhanate’s trade with the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt and Syria, trade that continued—mainly via Damascus—even during the height of the Mamluk–Ilkhanid conflict and increased in the fourteenth century. Another major continental route (p. 302) passed from Baghdād to Mecca and Aden. Due to Aden’s tariff rate, which imposed a lower duty on goods imported via Mecca than on those imported via Kīsh, some of the Indian Ocean merchandise that had been brought to Kīsh did not sail straight to Aden but was delivered overland, via Baghdād and Mecca. Moreover, even some of the items exported from Aden to Egypt went through the Aden–Ḥijāz–Baghdād–Syria–Egypt route. In the 1330s ʿIrāqī merchants were also found in Chaghadaid Central Asia,²⁷ the Golden Horde and the Delhi Sultanate, as well as in Cilician Armenia, which was frequented by various European traders. This attests to Baghdād’s position as a station on the continental routes leading from the Middle East to China, India and Europe, in addition to its central role in

²⁵ For the Ṭībīs, see Gill, *Jamāl al-Dīn Ṭībī*; Kauz, *Maritime Trade*.

²⁶ Yokkaichi, *Maritime and Continental*.

²⁷ The Chaghadaid Khanate (1260–1370), called after Chinggis Khan’s second son Chaghadaid, was the Mongol state in Central Asia that ruled the territory stretching from today’s east Xinjiang in China to the Oxus river in western Uzbekistan.

connecting the continental and maritime routes of the Middle East. A glimpse into the volume of this long distance trade is suggested by al-Qāshānī's report that in 1311 a fire in a certain guesthouse (*khān*) in Baghdād destroyed Chinese and Egyptian cloth and other merchandise worth more than a hundred *tūmen* (i.e. a million coins). The Ilkhan repaid the merchants from his own treasury to compensate the loss.²⁸ We do not know whether those merchants were partners (*ortaqs*), namely brokers who traded with Mongol capital and provided their patrons with part of their profits, but *ortaq* traders certainly operated in the city. Baghdād was also a regional commercial center for Iraq and the Jazīra.

Baghdād's commercial stature was based not only on transit trade but also on local production. The city was famous mainly for its textiles—silk, brocade and cotton, partly produced in the city's imperial workshops—as well as for glass and pearls. It also remained a center for paper and manuscript production, famed for its papermakers, calligraphers, copyists, illuminators and booksellers. The beautiful Qur'āns produced in Baghdād throughout Ilkhanid rule best represent the high level of the local artisans. The city's busy markets, arranged according to the types of merchandise or around major public buildings, mainly in eastern Baghdād, offered a wide variety of local and imported goods. That Öljeitü summoned painters and builders from Baghdād when he started building his new capital Sulṭāniyya (in today's Western Iran) in the early fourteenth century also attests to the quality of Baghdādī craftsmanship.

As for agriculture, Baghdād's hinterland flourished under the Ilkhans, partly due to the investment—again especially of al-Juwaynī and Ghazan—in irrigation. Al-Juwaynī ordered a canal to be dug from Anbār on the Euphrates to (p.303) Kūfa and Najaf and allegedly founded 150 villages along its banks, investing 100,000 gold *dīnārs* from his private purse in this enterprise, as well as repairing the dams of several madrasas in the city. Ghazan's canals, connecting the Euphrates to Mashhad Ḥusayn in Karbalā' and to the Tigris near Baghdād, greatly increased the production of the Karbalā' and al-Ḥilla regions. Baghdād was famous for its fruits—dates, pomegranates, grapes and lemons—as well as for its sugar cane, grain and cotton. The incursions of the Bedouin Arabs were fiercely controlled by the Mongol governors and hence were less of a threat to the 'Irāqī farmers than in late 'Abbāsīd times, but Ilkhanid armies on their way to or from Syria could be no less harmful.

²⁸ Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'rīkh-i Uljāytū*, 109.

Qazwīnī describes both the hunting grounds and the pasturelands around Baghdād as numerous and abundant.²⁹ Both were certainly used by the Mongols, but their economic value is hard to assess.

Taxation in Baghdād was mainly paid in cash. A census took place in the city soon after its conquest, but al-Juwaynī prevented the continued use of this method, thereby securing the exemption of the Baghdādī inhabitants from military service, the recruitment to which was based on the census. The taxes included mainly the Islamic land tax (*kharāj*), a Mongol poll tax levied on both farmers and nomads (*qubchur*) and the commercial tax (*tamgha*).³⁰ After the Ilkhans' conversion to Islām, the Islamic poll tax (*jizya*) was imposed on Christians and Jews. In addition, there were various irregular taxes or imposts, levied according to the Ilkhanate's political and economic needs. These were especially common in 1278-1284, due to the deteriorating economic situation, the conflict with the Mamluks and the political instability. Such levies were demanded from either the Ilkhanid center or the local Ilkhanid prince who resided near Baghdād; sometimes they were imposed only on the city's merchants or wealthy elite, but on other occasions, the whole population had to raise the required sum. A considerable part of the government's revenues was collected by tax farming or through drafts (i.e. by giving a certain person the written permission to collect a certain amount of tax in return for his services to the court). Both methods encouraged corruption and left a considerable part of the revenue at the local level instead of with the central government. Accusations of embezzlement were frequent and inspection committees were often sent to review officials' and tax farmers' behavior. Ghazan's reforms were meant to rectify some of these problems, and Qazwīnī, writing (p.304) in the Post-Ghazan period, attests to the relative prosperity of the Baghdādī population.³¹

Society and Culture

Contrary to the common image of devastation, and despite the harmful effects of the conquest, Baghdād's intellectual life flourished under the Mongols: the madrasas were reopened less than two years after 1258 and soon resumed full functioning, with their lecturers and students receiving payment from the city's endowments. Certainly, the

²⁹ Qazwīnī, *Nuzhat al-qulūb*, 41.

³⁰ The low tax records of the Ilkhanid period in comparison to Qazwīnī's claims about the Seljuq period, used to indicate the Ilkhanate's economic decline, refer to the land tax only and ignore the other taxes, the role of which in the overall revenues must have been considerable.

³¹ Qazwīnī, *Nuzhat al-qulūb*, 42.

Mongols' decision to retain the endowments intact contributed tremendously to the thriving of the city's intellectual life as well as to the cooptation of its scholarly elite, despite occasional manipulations of the endowments' money.³²

Baghdād's population was mainly Sunnī, with a majority of Shāfi'īs and a lively Ḥanbalī community. After the Mongol invasions and throughout the thirteenth century, immigrants from Central Asia increased the Ḥanafī presence in the city, and a small Mālikī community was also present in the madrasas that catered for all four schools of law. The loss of the caliphate and the initially infidel rule was a major blow for the Sunnī community, which lamented it in poetry and through historical works devoted to the caliphate, but its main response was to continue religious scholarship with full vigor. This is best attested in the attempts to bring the Mustanṣiriyya Madrasa's library back to its former glory: damaged during the conquest and probably also by the Mongols' deportation of books to Marāgha afterwards, the library reopened a year and a half after the conquest of the city with some of its original personnel. Its collection was constantly enlarged, mainly by books produced or copied in the city, but also by restoring formerly sold or damaged manuscripts and by purchasing books from local and international booksellers. By the end of the thirteenth century, the library had regained its reputation, and was described as equal to, or even better than, the Marāgha Observatory library with its alleged 400,000 books. Even though al-Maqrīzī's assertion that the Mustanṣiriyya library contained (p. 305) the *Yasa* of Chinggis Khan is probably false,³³ its collection included many rare books—also in the fields of medicine and science—that impressed its various visitors, including the Ilkhan Ghazan in 1296. The large number of exquisite copies of the Qur'ān—1001 allegedly produced by Yāqūt al-Musta'ṣimī (d. 1298), the leading calligrapher and librarian, alone, and some of them still extant—is another manifestation of the vitality of scholarship and craftsmanship in Ilkhanid Baghdād. Other colleges, both old and newly established, also had their own libraries, teachers and students. Baghdād's madrasas attracted students from the Ilkhanate and beyond, though apparently fewer than in the heyday of the 'Abbāsīd period, and Baghdādī scholars

³² Thus, Aḥmad Tegüder (d. 1284) gave an edict ordering the endowments to be returned to their original condition under the 'Abbāsīds, thereby objecting to paying salaries to Christian and Jewish physicians and astronomers out of endowment money (a pattern probably initiated under al-Ṭūsī and his sons), and replacing this with state salaries. When Arghun replaced Tegüder, however, he returned the endowments' inspection to the al-Ṭūsī family, who were said to have been prudent (see Pfeifer, *Conversion to Islam*, 201-211; Brack, *A Jewish Vizier*, 393-394).

³³ Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-khiṭaṭ*, II, 220.

enjoyed a good reputation that enabled them to easily find employment in the Ilkhanate, the Mamluk Sultanate or other Islamic centers.

At the same time, the loss of the caliphate combined with Mongol religious pluralism gave a boost to Shī'ism as well as to Baghdād's non-Muslim communities. The Shī'is, strong especially in the nearby cities of al-Ḥilla, Najaf and Karbalā', were also (again) present in Baghdād. The restored mosque and shrines of al-Kāẓimayn (also known as Mashhad Mūsā), where two of the twelve Shī'ī *imāms* were buried (together with Ibn al-'Alqamī and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī), became the main Shī'ī center and a site of 'Alī's veneration. In the early fourteenth century, the neighborhood of al-Kāẓimayn was even described as a small city. Some of the major contemporaneous Shī'ī luminaries were active in Ilkhanid Baghdād, most notably al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī (d. 1325), but also Ibn Tāwūs (d. 1266) and Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā (*fl.* 1302). All of them enjoyed Mongol patronage, but especially al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī, who became Öljeitü's close friend during the latter's Shī'ī period. Al-'Allāma's polemic treatise *Minhāj al-karāma fī mā'rifat al-imāma* (The Miraculous Way of Knowledge of the Imamate), which highlighted the advantages of Shī'ism over Sunnism, became a subject of heated debate with the Syrian Ḥanbalī Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328). In general, the Mamluks saw the growth of Twelver Shī'ism as a threat, reacting, *inter alia*, by blaming the fall of Baghdād on Shī'ī conspirators such as Ibn al-'Alqamī and al-Ṭūsī. Despite the Shī'is' blossoming and the great honor shown to the Prophet's descendants (by Sunnīs and Shī'is alike) due to the Mongol respect for genealogy, the city remained Sunnī. When Öljeitü ordered that the names of the first three rightly-guided caliphs be omitted from the Friday sermon, the preacher at the Caliph's Mosque wept and stepped out of the pulpit without fulfilling the order. Indeed, the only Shī'ī–Sunnī tension broke out in Baghdād after Öljeitü's heir returned to Sunnism. For the most part—and in sharp contrast to the late 'Abbāsīd situation—Shī'is and Sunnīs kept their disputes on (p. 306) an academic level. Moreover, Shī'is and Sunnīs often studied together with the same teachers and sometimes were not even easily distinguishable.

The city also hosted a considerable Ṣūfī community, both itinerant and students of the city's hospices and lodges (*ribāṭs*, *khānqāhs*), some of them newly established. Thus the Kubrawī *shaykh*, Nūr al-Dīn al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 1317), for example, settled in Baghdād in 1277, taught in various locations, notably the Shūnīziyya Cemetery, and later received from Ilkhan Öljeitü resources for establishing the Khānqāh at the Western Gate (*khānqāh-i bāb-i gharbī*). There, he instructed a variety of disciples and corresponded with senior

Ilkhanid officials. Most of the recorded Baghdādī Ṣūfīs, however, were not yet adherents of specific orders. Many of them were simultaneously also jurists and *ḥadīth* scholars.

Already in the ‘Abbāsīd period (and beforehand) Baghdād also included Jewish and Christian communities, both enlarged by migrants during Mongol rule. Both Jews and Christians took part in the Ilkhanid administration, enjoyed a certain level of Mongol patronage and compiled polemics against Islām. Among the Jewish community, the towering intellectual figure was the physician and philosopher Ibn Kammūna (d. 1284), a protégé of the al-Juwaynīs who corresponded with the major contemporaneous Muslim intellectuals and wrote the *Tanqīh al-abḥāth li-l-milal al-thalāth* (The Examination of the Three Faiths), refuting the truths of Christianity and Islām. After the fall of his patrons, the Baghdādī mob tried to attack him for these views, but he escaped to al-Ḥilla, where his son served as an official. Jews were persecuted mainly after the fall of Sa‘d al-Dawla (d. 1291), the highest-ranking Jewish administrator in Iran since the Achaemenid period, and briefly again after Ghazan’s conversion to Islām and in the Islamic purges of 1325.

The Christians were a more diverse lot, including East Syrians (“Nestorians”) and West Syrians (“Jacobites”), both old hands in the region, and newly-arrived Catholics—missionaries, merchants and sailors. The East Syrians were also strengthened by their co-religionists from East Asia, who used the open world of the Mongols to get closer to the Holy Land. Most famous among the newcomers were Mār Yahballaha III (d. 1317) and his companion Rabban Ṣawmā (d. 1294), who in the 1270s arrived from Dadu (Beijing) and then became, respectively, the patriarch of the East Syrian community in Baghdād—due to Yahballaha’s fluency in the Mongol language and manners—and Argun’s envoy to Europe. Inter-Christian debates were held in Iraq, and Riccoldo da Montecroce wrote a famous anti-Islamic polemic, *Contra legem Sarracenorum* (Against the Law of the Saracens). Despite this anti-Islamic treatise, Riccoldo, who studied Arabic and Islamic religion in Baghdād, also praised Muslim scholarship and the Muslim elite’s welcoming reception of foreigners interested in their doctrines, even after Ghazan’s Islamization. Riccoldo did not (p. 307) mention persecutions against Christians or Jews, though at some point (probably in 1295) he had to escape the city disguised as a camel driver. Persecutions took place briefly in 1265, 1295 and 1325, often resulting in a certain number of conversions to Islām.

The material culture—mostly illuminated manuscripts, described as signifying “the birth of Ilkhanid painting”³⁴—attests to a considerable Chinese influence. Even the decoration of the lavishly-illuminated fourteenth-century Baghdādī Qur’āns suggests a Chinese inspiration (e.g. by inserting petal decoration and other Chinoiserie motives), which in turn affected the Mamluk Qur’āns. The map attached to the *‘Ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt* (The Marvels of Creation) by the cosmographer Zakariyā’ b. Muḥammad Qazwīnī (d. 1283), another protégé of al-Juwaynī, depicted China as a major subcontinent on a par with India and Africa, thereby departing from previous conventions, unlike the work’s conservative text. Among the Baghdādī merchants, there were a few who visited China as well as India and Yemen. The pilgrimage caravans and even more so the mobile courts (*ordos*), with their scholars, merchants and diplomats, increased the city’s cosmopolitanism.

Close cultural (and economic) relations existed especially with the Mongols’ summer capitals in Azerbaijan, i.e. Tabriz, Marāgha and later Sulṭāniyya, and these connections became the main channel for the transmission of knowledge, although scholarly connections with the Mamluk realm were also constant and elaborate. The transmission of knowledge was not limited to the religious realm. Natural sciences also flourished in Ilkhanid Baghdād, partly due to the patronage of the Mongols and their officials, notably the Juwaynīs. Medicine and mathematics were taught in the Mustanṣiriyya Madrasa, while other sciences, such as astronomy, geography or music, were pursued privately or under the aegis of the scholars’ patrons. Baghdād’s intellectual standing in the Ilkhanate is best attested by the Ilkhanid historian Wassāf (d. 1328), who in his enumeration of the great luminaries of Abaqa’s reign included two Baghdādī scholars—the calligrapher Yāqūt al-Musta‘ṣimī and the musician Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Urmawī—and two others—Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and Shams al-Dīn al-Juwaynī—who spent considerable time in Baghdād.³⁵ That the first two figures had been close companions of the last ‘Abbāsīd caliph also suggests a considerable degree of continuity between the ‘Abbāsīd and Ilkhanid periods. Indeed, despite the high level of mobility—both physical and social—quite a few of the leading families from the ‘Abbāsīd period retained their elite status throughout Mongol rule.

³⁴ Simpson, *Role of Baghdād*, 91-116.

³⁵ Wassāf, *Ta’rīkh*, 55; Āyātī, *Tahrīr*, 32.

(p. 308) Ilkhanid Baghdād had a well-developed, and dominantly Muslim, public sphere, centered upon the Mustanşiriyya Madrasa and the Caliph’s Mosque in eastern Baghdād. Official letters from the Ilkhanid center were read in the Caliph’s Mosque while “cultural events”—such as public lectures by visiting scholars or the reading of new manuscripts—abounded in al-Mustanşiriyya. In both special prayers were held. Veneration of shrines—old and new—was also part and parcel of the city’s life, and private people—not only famous figures like Rashīd al-Dīn or al-Juwaynī’s wife, but also local merchants and junior scholars—established mosques, places for Qur’ān reading (*dār al-Qur’ān*), Şūfī lodges (*ribāṭs*) and colleges (madrasas) from the 1270s onwards. Side by side with these pious activities, however, the city included a lively “sinners’ quarter” abundant in wine and prostitutes, where curiosities such as East Indian pygmies or peculiar monsters (e.g. dragon-like snakes) could also be found. Occasionally, notably in 1325, there were attempts to purge the city of such non-Islamic sins, but their effects are hard to assess.

Another public arena was provided by funerals—especially of scholars such as al-Ṭūsī or descendants of the ‘Abbāsīd family (some of them brought from abroad to be buried in Baghdād)—in which special prayers with considerable public participation were held. A certain nostalgia for ‘Abbāsīd rule was expressed at ‘Abbāsīd funerals and in the various literary compositions devoted to the caliphate. Neither, however, seemed to bother the Mongols as long as the public order was not disturbed. Yet there was very little tolerance of deviant Muslim views that threatened the public order—such as a person claiming to be Jesus Christ or a Shī‘ī pretender who learned in a dream the location of the grave of a certain Shī‘ī saint. When the latter was proven wrong, he was executed just like the false Jesus. In fact, another common occurrence in the public sphere was the parade of heads or bodies of convicted criminals—whether false prophets or more mundane corrupt officials. Violence—manifested also in imaginative tortures—was certainly part and parcel of the city’s life. These harsh measures, however, seem to have been effective: riots between various schools of law, Shī‘īs and Sunnīs, or mens’ gangs (*‘ayyārūn*) were much less frequent under Mongol rule than in the late ‘Abbāsīd period.

Mongol rule also impacted the Baghdādī public sphere and intellectual scene, and not only during the *ordo*’s sojourns in the city. It brought many migrants to the city, notably Mongols and Iranians, and indeed not only were Persian language and literature becoming more prevalent, but several Baghdādī scholars and administrators were fluent

also in Mongolian. Persons and events of Mongol history became part of the general knowledge of the Baghdādī Muslim community, and Mongolian food was offered in the markets.³⁶

(p.309)

Conclusion

The laments over the destruction of Baghdād under Mongol rule have been vastly exaggerated. Nor did Baghdād become a backwater after the conquest. While Mongol rule began in an enormous devastation, the Mongols' efficient restoration policies and their cosmopolitan imperial culture contributed to the city's renewed striving. Indeed, although the city suffered from violent conquest, complex—and often corrupt—administration, irregular taxation and factional strife, these factors were mostly limited to short periods (1258-1260; 1281-1294). (p. 310) The city's restoration began immediately after its sack, and Baghdād's economy and scholarly institutions resurfaced soon afterwards, with the active support of the Ilkhans, long before the latter embraced Islām. Hülegü's measures ensured continuity in the city's bureaucracy and his decision to leave the endowments intact, namely to continue supporting the Baghdādī scholarly community, played a major role in coopting the local elites and reviving the city's intellectual life. The efficient administration of al-Juwaynī, who for most of his tenure received Abaqa's backing, consolidated the restoration in terms of both economy and culture. Connection with the Arab world, notably in Syria and Egypt, continued even at the height of the Ilkhanid Mamluk conflict and increased after its settlement in 1323. The rise of the city's prestige and its role as a more popular winter pasture for the Ilkhanid mobile court from Ghazan's conversion to Islām onwards also contributed to Baghdād's cosmopolitanism and prosperity. Under the Mongols, Baghdād certainly lost its position as the symbolic center of the caliphate and the Muslim world, but it became an important city in the vast, multi-cultural and cosmopolitan Ilkhanid Empire. Thus, later reconstructions of the fall of Baghdad in 1258 as a medieval catastrophe notwithstanding, Ilkhanid Baghdād was a thriving city both economically and culturally and the Mongols contributed to its rise no less than they caused its initial decline.

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³⁶ Biran, *Libraries*, 493-494.

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