PART 3

Culture and the Arts
Thinking about music in the context of the Mongol conquest of Baghdad (656/1258) usually brings to mind elegies lamenting the fall of the city, the caliphate, and occasionally the whole of Islamic civilization. This article, however, examines a different kind of music; it introduces the story of Ṣafī al-Dīn Urmawī (613–93/1216–94), the master musician and singer of the last ‘Abbasid caliph. By dint of his virtuosity and ingenuity, Urmawī managed to save both himself and his neighbourhood from the conqueror’s wrath and secure an important post in the Ilkhanid regime. In the first section of this work, I will translate and analyze the court musician’s personal account of the takeover, which is preserved in the Mamluk encyclopedia of Shihāb al-Dīn al-‘Umarī (d. 749/1349). The second part consists of a preliminary examination of the fate of Urmawī and his circle of musicians after the fall. Their experiences comprise a case study for assessing the fortunes of ‘Abbasid culture under Mongol rule. At least in this particular field, my findings suggest that the termination of the ‘Abbasid regime neither eviscerated nor triggered a decline in Islamic culture. On the contrary: the Mongols’ ascension led to the continued flourishing of the ‘Abbasid musical school and to its further enrichment.

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1 For poems lamenting the fall of Baghdad, see Hassan, “Loss of Caliphate,” 41–49; and Abū Rukun [sic], “The Fall of Abbasid Baghdad,” 81–101.

2 Ilkhanid musicians were deftly described in both ʿAzzāwī, al-Mūsīqā al-ʻIrāqīyah, 22–49 and Neubauer, “Musik zur Mongolenzeit in Iran,” 233–60, esp. fn. on 245. I will eschew rehashing their contributions, from which I benefited greatly. Instead, I will examine the material from a slightly different vantage point.
Ṣafi al-Din al-Urmawī’s Account

ʿAbd al-Mu’min b. Yūsuf b. Fākhir Ṣafī al-Dīn Urmawī was one of the more illustrious musical artists and theoreticians in the Muslim world.4 Born in Urmiya (a city in modern-day Azerbaijan province in Iran), he arrived in Baghdad as a young boy. Urmawī launched a career in jurisprudence at the newly established Mustanṣirīyya College (opened 631/1234), which would soon become the city’s most renowned madrasa. Like many scholars of his time, Urmawī was a polymath. In addition to his expertise in Shafi’ite and comparative law, he was well versed in calligraphy, Arabic, poetry, history, mathematics, and of course music. By the age of 21, he had already completed his magnum opus, Kitāb al-adwār (The book of cycles), a systematic exposition on the modal system, which was one of the most influential works on Islamic music theory.5 Like its author, who was also an accomplished singer and lute player, the book combines musical theory with practice.

At one and the same time, Urmawī made a name for himself in the discipline of calligraphy. When the last ʿAbbasid caliph, al-Mustaʿṣim bi-Allāh (r. 640–656/1242–58), set up his own library and looked for copyists, Ṣafī al-Dīn was hired due to his excellent penmanship. He was elevated to court musician relatively late in al-Mustaʿṣim’s reign, thanks to the recommendation of his former student, the caliph’s songstress Luḥāẓ. Soon after, he became one of the emperor’s closest companions, even tutoring his sons. Moreover, Urmawī had the ear of the Caliph’s top officials. In the process, he acquired considerable wealth, as his musical talents netted him a generous annual pension of 5,000 dinars.6

Urmawī’s experiences during the Mongol conquest of Baghdad are recorded in the volume on musicians (vol. 10) of the encyclopedia Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār (Paths of discernment into the kingdoms of the lands),

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3 Long after this article was sent to the editor, I found out that this part was translated by G. J. V. Gelder. See his “Sing Me to Sleep,” 1–9. His focus is, however, much narrower than mine, nor was he interested in the Mongol facet of this story.


5 For a recent description and evaluation of sundry versions, see Wright, “The modal System”; Idem, “A Preliminary Version of the ‘Kitāb al-Adwār,’” 455–78; and below.

which was compiled by the Mamluk historian and administrator Shihāb al-Dīn al-ʿUmari, one of the most knowledgeable Mamluk historians on the subject of the Mongols.7 ʿUmari’s account is based on the testimony of al-ʿIzz al-Irbili, alias al-Ḥasan b. ʿAmad b. Ẓafar (d. 726/1326), a physician and teacher who migrated to Damascus from the Ilkhanate. Al-Irbili was also described as a historian who penned, inter alia, many “unique biographies” (tarājim gharība).8 Furthermore, he is cited in Mamluk histories on the Ilkhan Ghazan (r. 695–704/1295–1304) and his famous vizier, Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 718/1318),9 thus he probably left the Ilkhanate after Ghazan’s reign.

With this short survey behind us, let us now turn to al-Irbili’s account of Urmawi’s fortunes in the midst of the Mongol takeover of Baghdad:10 al-ʿIzz al-Irbili mentioned in his History:

I was sitting with ʿAbd al-Muʾmin [i.e., Urmawi] in the Mustanṣiriyah College and [the topic of] the fall of Baghdad (wāqiʿat-Baghdād) came up. He told me that Hülegü summoned the city’s leaders and notables (ruʿāsāʾ al-balad wa-ʿurāfāʾahu) and asked them to divide the gated quarters (durūb)11 of Baghdad and its neighborhoods (mahālihā) and the houses of its people of means (buyūt dhawī yasārihā) between the commanders of his dynasty. They divided them and allotted every neighborhood or two or every two markets to a great amīr. The quarter (darab) in which I lived was allotted to a commander of 10,000 riders, named

7 The whole third volume of ‘Umari’s encyclopedia is devoted to the Chinggisids. This part had been edited, annotated and translated into German by Lech. See al-ʿUmari, Das Mongolische Weltreich.
9 For example, see al-Ṣafadī, Aʿyān, 4:9, 14, 43; and ʿUmari, Masālik, 10:93.
10 ʿUmari, Masālik, 10:353–56 (or the facsimile edition: ed. F. Sezgin with A. Jolhosha, E. Neubauer, 10:31–15). ‘Umari’s text is quoted, with minor changes, in al-Ḥamawī, Thamārāt al-awrāq, 461–66 (I would like to thank Prof. Michael Lecker for referring me to this source). The story is cited in ‘Azzāwī, al-ʾMuṣīqā, 27–31; and Nāji Maʿrūf, Tārīkh ʿulamāʾ al-Mustanṣirīya, 1:270–74. A Hebrew summary, based on ‘Azzāwī’s work, is included in Abū Rukun [sic], “The Fall,” 117–20. The latter dates al-ʿIzz al-Irbili’s death to 660/1262 and claims that the story is found in Urjūzat al-anghām (p. 117 and n. 514)—a treatise of music by another person with a nearly identical name: Badr al-Dīn Irbili (686–755/1287–1354). However, the Urjūza, which is included in ‘Azzāwī’s book (106–17), does not contain this story.
11 For a discussion on darab (pl. durūb) and its meanings, see Eickelman, “Is there an Islamic City?,” 274–94, esp. 283. Dr. Nimrod Luz graciously brought this source to my attention.
Bānū Noyan. Hülegū allowed some of the commanders to kill, capture, and loot for three days, some for two days, and others for only one day, according to their ranks. When the commanders entered Baghdad’s first gated neighborhood, namely the one where I was living, quite a few people of means were gathered there. And at my place, around fifty of the notable singers (a’yān al-mughānī), who had property and beauty, were assembled. Bānū Noyan stopped at the gate of the quarter, which was barricaded with wood and earth. They knocked on the gate and said: ‘Open the gate and obey us, and we will give you safe conduct (amān). And if not, we will burn the gate and kill you.’ Accompanying him [Baiju] were the naptha throwers [zarrāqūn], the carpenters [najjārūn], and his armed followers.

ʿAbd al-Mu’min said: ‘I’ll go out to him in submission and obedience.’ I opened the gate and went out to him on my own, wearing dirty clothes and awaiting death. I kissed the ground in front of him and he told the interpreter: ‘Ask him: Who are you? Are you the leader of the quarter’s residents?’ I said: ‘Yes.’ He said: ‘If you want to save your life, bring us this and that’—and he asked for quite a lot. I kissed the ground for the second time and said: ‘All that the amīr asked for will be brought, and everyone in this neighborhood will be under your rule. Order your armies to loot the other neighborhoods assigned to them and stay [here] so I can host you along with anyone you want from your retinue. I will collect all that you have asked for.’ He [the commander] consulted with his followers and came with thirty people. I brought him to my house and spread out the precious caliphal carpets and the silk covers (sutūr) embroidered with gold. I immediately served him food—fried and roasted dishes and

12 I assume that this is referring to Baiju Noyan (often rendered Bājū in Arabic sources). Baiju (fl. 625–57/1228–59) was the Mongol general and military governor in northwestern Iran. When Hülegū advanced westward, Baiju was among the generals under his command. He distinguished himself in the Baghdad campaign, as his forces subdued the western part of the city. See P. Jackson, “Bāyjū” in Encyclopædia Iranica.

13 While the facsimile and Ibn Ḥijja’s version read waqafa, ʿUmarī’s 2010 edition reads waqata.

14 ‘Umarī’s edition reads mudabbas/mudbis, which can be understood as ‘chained’ (deriving from dabbūs or chain); see Piamenta, Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic, 143. Ibn Ḥijja’s version employs the more suitable “mutattaris,” a derivative of mitras: barricade, barrier, or rampart. Hans Wehr’s dictionary, 93, http://ejtaal.net/m/aa/#HW=111,LL=1_339,LS=2,HA=76.

15 During the campaign, the carpenters probably built siege machines.
sweets—and ate a sample [of the dish] in his presence.16 When he finished eating, I arranged a royal assembly (majlisan mulūkiyan) for him and brought him gilded dishes from Aleppo [and] glass and silver dishes filled with distilled beverages (sharāb murawwaq). When the drinking cups had made a round and he got a little tipsy, I brought ten singers, all of them women, each of whom sang a different delightful tune (malhāt). I gave them an order, and they all sang in unison. The assembly was animated. He [Baiju] was excited by the music and his soul was satisfied. He hugged a singer he liked and had intercourse with her (wāqaʾahā) during the assembly, while we were watching. His day came to a close in the best possible way.

By the time of the evening prayer, his men arrived with the loot and the prisoners [from other neighbourhoods]. Apart from the food (ʿalīq)17 and the gifts of wine (hibāt al-ʿawāniyya) that were before him, I brought them wonderful presents of gold and silver dishes and coins, cash, and splendid cloths; I apologized for the dearth [of gifts] and told him: ‘The commander came without notice, but tomorrow, God willing, I will invite the commander to a better feast than this.’ He rode and I kissed his mount, whereupon I returned [to the neighbours]. I gathered the rich people of the quarter and told them: ‘Look out for yourselves; this man will be here tomorrow and the day after as well. Each day, I want to double [the volume of the gifts from] the previous day.’ They collected from their houses all kinds of gold, precious cloths, and arms worth 50,000 dinars. He already came to me before sunrise the next day, and what he saw left him astonished.

On this day, he [Bānū] arrived with his wives, and I gave him and his wives precious gifts, gold, and cash worth 20,000 dinars. On the third day, I gave him precious pearls, expensive gems, and a beautiful jennet with caliphal gear, saying: ‘This is the caliph’s mount.’ I served all those who were with him and said: ‘This quarter is already under your command; and if you grant its people their lives, he [i.e., Hülegü] will be blameless in the eyes of God and men, for all that is left to them is their souls.’ He said: ‘I know this. From the first day I gave them their souls, and my soul did not tell me to kill or capture them. But before doing anything else, you

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16 The purpose behind this action was probably to demonstrate that the food was not poisoned.

17 While the principal meaning of ʿalīq is ‘fodder,’ it is also used as a metaphor for wine or anything eaten; Lane's dictionary, 10:421 http://ejtaal.net/m/aa/#HW=652,LL=5_421,LS=2, HA=506,HW_HIDE.
should come with me to see the Qan. I already mentioned you to him and
I brought him one of the objects you gave me during the first [few] days.
He liked it and ordered [me] to summon you.' I feared for my life and for
the people of the quarter, and I said [to myself]: ‘He will take me out of
Baghdad, kill me, and loot the quarter.’ I became apprehensive and said:
‘Oh, khūnad [lord], Hülegū is a great king and I am a lowly man, a singer;
I am afraid and in awe of him.’ He said: ‘Don’t be scared, only good things
will befall you; he [the Qan] is a man who likes the gifted (ahl al-fadā‘īl).’
I said: ‘Can you guarantee that nothing bad will happen to me?’ He said:
‘Yes.’ So I told the people of the quarter: ‘Bring your precious things and
give me all you have: splendid singers and a substantial amount of money
in gold and silver.’ I brought from my place loads of good food, plenty of
wine—old and excellent—and beautiful dishes—all of it from gold and
inscribed silver. I took with me three of the most beautiful singers and the
best [lute] players. I wore a suit of caliphal cloth and rode on a beautiful
jennet, which I used to ride on when I went to the caliph. When Bānū
Noyan saw me in this [outfit], he said: ‘You’re a minister!’ And I said:
‘Indeed, I am the caliph’s singer and his companion, but so long as I feared
you, I wore those tattered and filthy clothes. When I became [one of]
your subjects, my status was restored and I felt secure. Hülegū is a great
king, greater than the caliph, and I can only enter his presence with
courtliness and dignity.

He liked my response, and I went with him to Hülegū’s camp. He
entered his presence, brought me with him, and said to Hülegū: ‘This is
the man I mentioned’ and pointed at me. When Hülegū’s eyes fell on me,
I kissed the ground and knelt as is the Tatars’ custom. Bā[nnu] Noyan told
him: ‘This [man] was the caliph’s singer and did so and so for me; he
[already] brought you presents.’ He [Hülegū] said: “Raise him!” and they
raised me. I kissed the ground for the second time and wished him well. I
offered him and his retinue the gifts that I took with me. And whenever I
gave him something, he asked about it, then left it. Thereafter, he did the
same with the food before asking me: ‘You were the singer of the caliph?’
I said: ‘Yes.’ And he asked: ‘What is the best thing you know in the science
of music (‘ilm al-ṭarab)?’ I said: ‘The best is a song that I sing which causes
the listener to fall asleep.’ He said: ‘Sing to me for a while, until I fall
asleep.’ I regretted [my words], saying [to myself]: If I sang for him and he
does not fall asleep he would say: ‘This one is a liar,’ and he may kill me. I
must accomplish this with a ruse. And I said: ‘Oh Lord, striking the lute's
chords is only good while drinking wine. Let the king drink two or three
cups so that the music will fall into place.’ He said: ‘I don’t want the wine,
[for] it takes my mind away from the interests of my kingship; I'm impressed with your prophet who forbade it'; whereupon he imbibed three large cups. When his face turned red, I asked for his permission and sang to him. I had with me a singer called Šabā. In [all of] Baghdad there was not [a singer] more beautiful than her or with a better voice. She excelled at playing the lute, picking out gentle melodies that lulled him to sleep. She sang, and before I finished the piece I saw him drowsing off already. I stopped the singing abruptly and struck a strong note, which woke him up. I kissed the ground and said: ‘Did the king fall asleep?’ And he said: ‘You were right, I fell asleep; now what do you wish from me?’ I said: ‘I request that the king give me a sumayka [trifle].’18 He asked: ‘And what trifle would you like?’ I said: ‘A garden that belonged to the caliph.’ He smiled and said to his retinue: ‘This poor singer is short-sighted.’ He then said to the interpreter: ‘Why didn’t you ask for a fortress or a town; what is a garden?’ I kissed the ground and said: ‘Oh King, this garden will suffice. What me—the governor of a castle or town?!’ So he allotted me the garden and the full benefits that I had when the caliph reigned and added a pension that included bread, meat, and two dinars worth of fodder for my mount. Accordingly, he issued a signed and sealed order (firmān mukmil al-ʿalāʾim) on my behalf and I departed. Bānū Noyan chose a commander with fifty riders, who [bore] a black standard that was Hülegü’s special standard, to protect my quarter. The commander sat at the quarter’s gate. He hung the black standard at the top of the quarter’s gate, and it stayed this way until Hülegü left Baghdad.

Al-Irbilī asked: ‘How much did you lose in the process?’ He [ʿAbd al-Mu’min] replied: ‘Over 60,000 dinars of gold, the majority of which was brought to my quarter by the rich people and the rest from various luxuries (naʿam) that the caliph had bestowed unto me.’ I [al-Irbilī] asked him about the salary and the garden. He said: ‘The caliph’s children took it [the garden] from me, saying: ‘This was an inheritance from our father. And the pension was cut off by Šāhib Shams al-Dīn al-Juwaynī, but he compensated me for it and for the garden with 60,000 dirhams.’

While it is difficult to verify the details in Urmawī’s vivid account, its main contours seem plausible enough, as they echo Ilkhanid sources; in addition, many of the elements dovetail neatly with other contemporaneous descriptions of Baghdad’s fall. The much less heroic Persian version of this story appears in the history of Waṣṣāf (d. 729/1329), who describes Urmawī as an unequallled

18 Sumayka is literally a small fish.
master in the science of music, a second Pythagoras.\(^{19}\) According to Waṣṣāf, as the Mongols were occupying the city, Urmawī appeared on the threshold of Hülegū’s tent and began playing music. Amid the chaos, he performed from morning to evening, but nobody paid any attention. When Hülegū was informed of the situation, he summoned the musician before him, praised his performance and took him under his aegis. More specifically, Urmawī was granted an annual pension of 10,000 dinars (twice the amount of his caliphal stipend) from the government revenues of Baghdad. Additionally, the payment would accrue to his progeny.\(^{20}\)

Urmawī’s version strengthens the impression made by other sources that the sack of Baghdad was a meticulously organized campaign in which the troops fully adhered to Hülegū’s orders,\(^{21}\) rather than a sudden outburst of barbarism. Moreover, this story offers a different picture from the regular descriptions of total massacre. The ability of both a local commander and Hülegū himself to enjoy a concert before the city was fully secured (according to most descriptions the Caliph was still alive by the time of the city’s pillage), certainly manifest the confidence of the Mongols in the result of their campaign.\(^{22}\) This is also reminiscent of Chinggis Khan’s conquest of Bukhara in around 1220, when the assailants appropriated singing girls and wine from the defeated

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19 Waṣṣāf, *Ṭārīḥ-i Waṣṣāf*, 55; Āyatī, *Ṭāḥrīr*, 32. In the Muslim world, Pythagoras was as renowned for his musical exploits as his mathematical prowess, and music was deemed to be a science that is close to mathematics.


22 Mustawfī also states that Hülegū arranged a banquet, which included wine, singing girls, and Mongolian music after the capture of Baghdad and before the caliph’s execution (L. J. Ward, *Ẓafarnāmah of Mustawfī*, 2322). However, his version of the conquest is so far-fetched that it calls into question the tenability of this particular anecdote as well. Mustawfī also claims that singers and musicians entertained Hülegū in Samarqand, before the army penetrated the Middle East; ibid., 2318.
As we shall see, the Mongols’ documented affinity for vinous feasts that were enlivened with music lends credence to these two stories.

Urmawī provides much more information on the looting—a phase that was practically ignored by contemporaneous accounts, but described in apocalyptic terms by other, mostly later, sources. To my knowledge, none of the other versions refer to the notables dividing up their city into plunder zones or to Hūlegū’s premeditated assignment of different looting spans for various ranks. In any event, these periods—ranging from one to three days—support the contention that the sack of Baghdad lasted for a week, as opposed to those sources claiming that it dragged on for 30 to 40 days.

Although the tactic of foisting a ‘pay or die’ proposition on the defeated populace was not alien to the Mongols, Urmawī is the only one to note that it was imposed on the residents of Baghdad after the conquest: if the Mongols proposed such an option it was usually before they attacked the city and only if the city offered no opposition. That said, certain other Baghdadi groups are known to have received safe conduct (amān) from Hūlegū, often in return for exorbitant sums of money. While the details vary from source to source, most of them agree that amān was granted to the city’s Christians, the Shi’ites from Hilla, merchants from Khurasan (who already had relations with the Mongols), and several Muslim notables. The Shi’ites, merchants, and

25 The sources according to which the plunder lasted a week are, e.g., Boyle, “Death,” 160; Bar Hebraeus, The Chronography, 431; Rashid/Karīmī, 1713 and Rashid/Thackston, 2:498; Nuwayrī, Nihāyat al-arab, 27:383; those citing a period ranging from 30 to 40 days include, among others, Kitāb al-ḥawādith, 359; Ibn al-Sāʾī [Pseudo], Kitāb? mukhtaṣar akhbār al-khulafā, 136; Ibn al-Kathīr, al-Bidāya, 13:236; Waṣṣāf, Ṭārīkh, 42; and Ayātī, Ṭāhrīr, 23.
26 Further on this issue see ʿUmarī/Lech, 102, and the discussion in Biran, “Violence and Non-Violence.”
27 For example, see Kitāb al-Ḥawādith, 359, 360 and Gilli-Elewy, “Al-Ḥawādit,” 367, 368; Boyle, “Death,” 159. According to Ṭūsī, scholars, shaykhs, and whoever offered no resistance to the Mongols were offered amān. He also claims that this option was suggested at the early stages of the conquest. Such an option is also mentioned by Rashid al-Dīn (Rashid/Karīmī, 1710, and Rashid/Thackston, 2:496) as offered to Qāḍis (judges), scholars, shaykhs, ‘Alids, Nestorian priests and “persons who do not combat against us.” Christians were spared according to Bar Hebraeus, Chronography, 1:431, and according to the Arabic version of his work, Christians, Shi’ites, and scholars avoided the sword: Ibn al-ʿIbrī (Bar
perhaps others indeed secured their lives at considerable cost.\textsuperscript{28} As in the case of Urmawī’s quarter, Mongol guards were dispatched to guarantee the safety of the Christians and merchants.\textsuperscript{29} In all these instances, neighbours flocked to those who received protection, in the hopes of saving their own lives.\textsuperscript{30}

Another interesting element of this narrative is the singers’ prosperity. Urmawī’s description of the fifty singers in his upscale neighbourhood is indeed commensurate with the last ‘Abbasid Caliph’s well-established interest in, or obsession for, music. In fact, his zealous patronage of this art form is often cited as one of the reasons that he neglected his duties and compromised his ability to cope with the Mongol threat.\textsuperscript{31} The riches that these singers were able to fork over to their captors following the two-week siege that the city had just endured are quite impressive. Urmawī’s reputation as a hedonist notwithstanding,\textsuperscript{32} viewing the luxuries that he amassed in juxtaposition to the oft-repeated descriptions of the unpaid troops of Baghdad before the Mongol attack\textsuperscript{33} lends credence to the complaints as to the decadence of the city’s upper class.\textsuperscript{34} It also calls to mind the famous, apocryphal meeting between Hülegū and al-Mustaṣim in the defeated sultan’s treasury, at which the former asked his counterpart why he had refrained from using his ample holdings to build a capable army.\textsuperscript{35} Urmawī’s description indeed highlights the huge economic disparities in the city as well as the lack of city-wide solidarity. While the musician is deeply concerned about his quarter’s fate,
he has no compunction about advising the Mongols to loot other neighbourhoods. Similarly, he does not condemn the rape that was perpetrated at his home. In all likelihood, these factors contributed to the city’s defeat.

While there is no doubt that Urmawī was terrified by the Mongol onslaught, which may very well account for his above-mentioned behaviour, he considered the Mongols’ actions as a hateful but legitimate prerogative of the conquerors, and they did not prevent him from throwing in his lot with them. Moreover, his description falls under the heading of the relatively mundane accounts of the fall of Baghdad. In fact, it stands in stark contradistinction to the more apocalyptic versions that inform some Mamluk sources and many contemporary Arabic works. What is more, Hülegü’s interest in ‘gifted’ people, not least his generosity towards the musician in question, are incompatible with the (exceedingly modern) myth that the ‘Tatars’ destroyed Islamic culture. They fit well, however, with Rashid al-Din’s description of Hülegü as “A great lover of wisdom, [Hülegü] encouraged the learned to debate the basic sciences and rewarded them with stipends and salaries. His court was adorned by the presence of scholars and wise men (‘ulamā’ wa ḥukamā’).” Interestingly, the other ‘man of talent’ known to receive Hülegü’s auspice during the conquest—a commander and scribe (amīr kātib) who excelled in calligraphy, belles-letters and horsemanship, and was famed for his beauty—was also closely connected to the Caliph’s court. It can be argued that Hülegü sought to enhance his kingly reputation by employing representatives of ‘Abbasid glory at his court. At the very least, the Mongols embraced those cultural elements of the ‘Abbasid court that suited their own norms or bolstered their legitimacy. The fate of Urmawī in Ilkhanid Baghdad reinforces this vantage point.

36 See above; Gilly-Elevy, 371 and e.g. al-Sarjānī, Qiṣṣat al-Tatār min al-bidāya ilā ‘Ayn Jālūt, 101–70, 271–76; Manṣūr, Qiṣṣat suqūṭ Baghdād, 96–98. The American conquest of Baghdad in 2003 revived the memory of the Mongol conquest but in a rather distorted way. See Biran, “Violence.”
37 While the cultural ramifications of Baghdad’s fall are among the most lamented developments in modern Muslim literature, the treatment of this topic in contemporaneous sources is rather scanty. See Biran, “Violence.”
38 Rashid/Karīmī, 2:734 and Rashid/Thackston, 2:513 (though he translates ʿulamāʾ wa ḥukamāʾ as “philosophers and scientists”). For more on this issue see Reuven Amitai, “Hülegü and his Wise Men.” For Hülegü as a humanist and patron of scholars see also Lane, Early Mongol Rule.
39 This is Falak al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Sayf al-Dīn Aydamir al-Mustaʿṣimī (639–710/1240–1310), whom Hülegü appointed “the supervisor (shīḥna) of the wise men (ḥukamāʾ) who found refuge in his court and were dealing with chemistry.” Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, Talkhīṣ majmaʿ al-ādāb, 3:281; and see the discussion in Biran, “Violence.”
Urmawī’s Circle of Musicians in the Mongol World

After the conquest, Urmawī remained in Baghdad, but apparently stayed in touch with Hülegū. The polymath wrote a scroll (darj) on the Ilkhan’s behalf, which the latter was quite pleased with, and it seems as though he paid his sponsor a visit in Azerbaijan. Moreover, Hülegū appointed him inspector of endowments in Iraq, a position he held until Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, an even more acclaimed scholar, took over in 665/1267. Urmawī was a highly respected and very popular inspector. He is even said to have attained “the status of Hülegū himself” among the Iraqi population.40 In Baghdad itself, the polymath became a companion and beneficiary of the Juwaynī brothers: ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Aṭā Malik (623–81/1226–83), the famous historian and Mongol governor of Baghdad (657–680/1259–81) and Shams al-Dīn (d. 682/1284), the chief minister of Hülegū and his successor, Abaqa (r. 663–681/1265–82).

The Juwaynīs appointed Urmawī to head the Baghdad Inshāʾ (chancellery), most likely on account of his calligraphic skills. In addition, he taught music and calligraphy to the sons of the city’s notables, including those of Shams al-Dīn Juwaynī, Bahā’ al-Dīn and Sharaf al-Dīn Hārūn. The latter showed great interest in music and subsequently became his teacher’s patron. In turn, Urmawī dedicated al-Risāla al-Sharafiyya fi’l-nisab al-taʾlīfiyya (The Sharafian treatise on musical proportions, c. 665/1267)—his most acclaimed work on music theory aside from the Kitāb al-adwār—to Sharaf al-Dīn Hārūn (put to death in 685/1285).41

Following the Juwaynīs’ ouster in the early–mid 1280s, Urmawī lost his administrative post and fell into poverty. He therefore tried his luck in Tabriz, where he met al-ʿIzz al-Irbilī in 689/1290.42 Moreover, he received some financial assistance from Quṭb al-Dīn Shirāzī, another distinguished Ilkhanid polymath, who wrote extensive commentaries on Ṣafī al-Dīn’s works.43 The musician eventually returned to Baghdad, where he died in 693/1294 while imprisoned for a debt of 300 dirhams.44 Two of his three sons were employed as scribes (kātib) in the Baghdad administration, and the third was a member of the city’s

41 Ibid.; Kutubī, Fawāt, 2:31; al-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfi, 19:342–43; see also Waṣṣāf, Tārīkh, 66 and Āyatī, Taḥrīr, 36. For more on the Juwaynīs and their support of the arts, see, e.g., Lane, Early Mongol Rule, 177–212.
intellectual community.\textsuperscript{45} Despite his ultimate fall from grace, Urmawī became synonymous with music in both the Muslim and Mongol worlds. Waṣṣāf considered him one of the four leading scholars of the Aбаqa era, sharing this honour with his close associates: Nasīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, the astrologer and philosopher; the minister Shams al-Dīn Juwaynī, and Yāqūt al-Mustaʿṣimī, the calligrapher.\textsuperscript{46} Urmawī’s theoretical works were extremely well received in the Ilkhanate and would continue to serve as lynchpins of music scholarship for generations to come. The most popular of these texts was Kitāb al-adwār, which merited an extensive commentary (as did al-Risāla al-Sharafiyya) from Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī.\textsuperscript{47} The ruler of Fars, Jamāl al-Dīn Abū Ishāq İnǰū (r. 742–756/1342–56), commissioned ’Imād al-Dīn Yahyā b. Ahmad Kāshi to render Kitāb al-adwār into Persian and write an extensive commentary on this treatise. It continued to be translated, interpreted, and disseminated for hundreds of years in the Jalayirid, Timurid, Ottoman, and Safavid realms. In the early eighteenth century, the book was rendered into French by Pétis de la Croix, in what was the first of several Western translations.\textsuperscript{48} As we can see, the ‘Abbasid theory of music continued to evolve long after the empire’s demise.

During his heyday under the Juwaynīs, Ṣafī al-Dīn Urmawī was the centre of a wide circle of students and colleagues. His most renowned protégés (apart from the Juwaynīs) were Yāqūt al-Mustaʿṣimī (ca. 618–98/1221–98), who studied both calligraphy and music with Urmawī at the caliph’s court and earned


\textsuperscript{46} Waṣṣāf, Tarīkh, 55; and Ayatī, Tahārīr, 32. As discussed below, Yāqūt was Urmawī’s student in ‘Abbasid Baghdad. Urmawī enjoyed the patronage of Shams al-Dīn Juwaynī, and in 661/1262 he delivered Ṭūsī’s disquisition (or letter) on the history of Chinggis Khan to Baghdad; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, Talkhīṣ, 3:319–20. Khwāndamīr also considers Urmawī as one of the leading scholars of Aбаqa’s reign, but offers a different and more extensive list of notables; Khwāndamīr, Ḥabīb al-siyar, 3:107; Idem (Thackston), 3:60.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibn Ḥajar, Durur, 5:108–9. Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī’s commentary on Urmawī’s works is discussed in Fallāhzadeh, Persian Writing, 102–7.

\textsuperscript{48} For the impact of Kitāb al-adwār, see Fallāhzadeh, Persian Writing, 33–35, 102, 107, 133–34, 145–46, 149, 201–2, 207–10; and Neubauer, “Ṣafī al-Dīn,” among others. An example of Urmawī’s continued popularity is the recent recording of several notations from Kitāb al-adwār along with the publication of attendant French and English commentaries in Lebanon; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Migo5Wm4QK8; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7DY4V9eO_8 and Abou Mrad, Musique, and see its review by Wright in Yearbook, 197–98. Last but not least, Ṣafī al-Dīn has merited a Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/pages/Safi-al-Din-al-Urmawi/115898865087179, accessed August 2, 2012.
lasting fame in Ilkhanid Iran;⁴⁹ Shams al-Dīn Ahmad al-Suhrawardī (654–741/1256–1340), also a noted calligrapher and musician;⁵⁰ and al-Jamāl al-Mashriqi (b. 661/1262), the famous singer.⁵¹ In addition, a bevy of less acclaimed students are enumerated in the sources.⁵² Urmawi was also in contact with a wide range of peers. More specifically, his circle was on close terms with the Mawṣil singers (some of whom moved to Baghdad after the passing of the well-known patron of their profession, Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu', the Atabeg of Mawṣil, in 657/1259);⁵³ and other accomplished musicians from al-Jazīra, Anatolia, and Khurasan. The Juwaynīs' largesse facilitated artistic and scholarly exchanges, and enabled the invitation of prominent musicians to Baghdad.⁵⁴

Urmawi's students also trained a new generation of musicians who then continued to teach and play his works. The renowned singer Kutayla (fl. 750–60/1350–60 in Mardin and Cairo) is said to have memorized dozens of Urmawi's suites (nawba), which by some counts numbered 130.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Niẓām al-Dīn al-Ṭayyārī, the most acclaimed student of al-Suhrawardī, maintained


⁵⁰ Al-Ṣafadī, A'yān, 1: 414–16; Ibn Ḥajar, Durar, 1: 335; 'Umāri, Masālik, 10:390–94.


⁵² Among these figures are the 'Abbasid Baghdadi singer Luḥāz ('Umāri, Masālik, 10:356); the flautist Ḥasan al-Nāy, alias al-Zāmir ('Umāri, Masālik, 10:402; and Neubauer, "Musik," 255); Sa'd al-Dīn al-Sīlkū ('Umāri, Masālik, 10:402); Zaytūn ('Umāri, Masālik, 10:402); and Fakhr the musician (Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, Talkhīṣ, 3:62), who might be identical to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Shahrabānī (Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, Talkhīṣ, 3:234). Two others, 'Alī al-Sitāhī (or Sītā'ī) and Ḥusām al-Dīn Qutlugh Būqā, are mentioned in 'Azzāwī and Neubauer's works on the basis of the works of 'Abd al-Qādir Marāghī (d. 838/1435), the most accomplished Persian writer in the field of music, who was raised in Baghdad and wrote a lengthy commentary on Kitāb al-adwār. Unfortunately, I did not have access to his work and have thus far been unable to identify the people mentioned therein. (Farmer, “Abd al-Ḳādir b. Ghaybī,” Brill Online, accessed August 3, 2012. http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/abd-al-kadir-b-ghaybi-SIM_0091); 'Azzāwī, al-Mūsīqā, 33–34; and Neubauer, "Musik," 254–55.

⁵³ The most prominent of these singers was Ibn al-Dāhān al-Mawṣilī (d. 687/1287), whose fame approached that of Urmawi; 'Umāri, Masālik, 10:346–48. For others, see ibid., 10:405, 409; Bar Hebraeus, The Chronography, 1:443; and Neubauer, "Musik," 236.

⁵⁴ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, Talkhīṣ, 4:299; and 'Umāri, Masālik, 10:396–406.

⁵⁵ 'Umāri, Masālik, 10:377. At the very least, Kutayla was acquainted with Jamal al-Mashriqi and might have been his student (ibid., 380); for a discussion on nawba, see Wright, “Nawba,” Brill Online, accessed August 3, 2012. http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/nawba-SIM_5859.
close ties with Abū Saʿīd, the last Ilkhan (r. 717–736/1317–35), who was a distinguished musician in his own right.56

The flourishing of music under the Ilkhans owed a great deal to the Juwaynīs’ patronage, but another factor was the Mongols’ affinity for this art form. From the Mongols’ perspective, music was a valued form of entertainment, which complimented another of their favourite pastimes—drinking. Furthermore, it was part and parcel of their Shamanic rites and a royal status symbol. While possessing their own venerable musical traditions, the Mongols consistently displayed a great deal of interest in the entertainment of other cultures.57 Consequently, expert musicians from various backgrounds were highly appreciated and generously rewarded in Mongol lands. Partaking in their lords’ feasts, the musicians had ample opportunity to forge bonds and influence the Mongol elite. A case in point was Ilkhan Īljeitū’s marriage to a singer by the name of Najma Khatun, who, however, was bribed to ‘lobby’ or manipulate her husband into retreating from Raḥba.58 Some musicians became their lord’s confidants. For example, in several cases a singer served as the ruler’s envoy to a neighbouring country.59 These relations also fostered acculturation. Descriptions of, say, Abū Saʿīd studying music and composing his own Persian verses and lyrics certainly suggest a high degree of royal assimilation into local culture.60

Musicians also filled a variety of other duties, especially in all that concerned ceremonies of state: for instance, they performed at events marking the arrival or departure of the ordu (the ruler’s camp), and they entertained at receptions in honour of visiting delegations.61 Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who accompanied Abū Saʿīd’s ordu en route from Baghdad to Sultaniyya in the 1320s, reports that there were a hundred of the royal musicians—both singers and players—in the entourage; and this number does not include their counterparts who were affiliated

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56 Al-Ṭayyārī was also a distinguished calligrapher; ‘Umarī, Masālik, 10:406–9. After the fall of the Ilkhate, he temporarily migrated to the Mamluk Sultanate. ‘Umarī draws heavily on al-Ṭayyārī by virtue of the latter’s knowledge on the House of Hülegū. For a discussion on Abū Saʿīd’s musical career, see ‘Umarī, Masālik, 10:370–72. While the centre of the music world appears to have shifted from Baghdad to the royal court in the later Ilkhate, famous singers—both male and female—were still to be found in Baghdad; see, e.g., ‘Umarī, Masālik, 10:381, 382; and Ibn Ḥajar, Durar, 5:65.
59 For musicians who served as envoys, see ‘Umarī, Masālik, 10: 403; and al-Ṣafadī, A’yān, 5363. For singers who were on close terms with the non-Mongol rulers of that era, see, e.g., ‘Umarī, Masālik, 10:346, 375.
60 ‘Umarī, Masālik, 10:371–73.
with the *amūrs*, the vizier, and the *khātun*s (queens).\(^62\) It also bears noting that the ruler customarily provided his princes, *amūrs*, and even some civilian officials, such as the *naqīb al-ashrāf* (the head of the ‘Alids), with drums, as part of their insignia. The drums were often augmented by other instruments for the purpose of helping these notables form bands.\(^63\) Musicians also accompanied Mongol troops to the front lines, where string instruments were played and kettledrums beaten to signify the start of battle.\(^64\) One contemporaneous report of the Mongol attack on Baghdad notes that the invading force took up its positions “happily with songs and trumpets.”\(^65\) Similarly, when the Ilkhanid *naqīb al-ashrāf* took flight from Abū Saʿīd, he sounded his drums and trumpets. As a result, startled villagers who believed that it was a “Tatar raid” fled in panic.\(^66\) In light of the above, it is evident that there was a healthy demand for musicians in the Mongol Empire.

These roles and the leadership’s fondness for music were also mirrored in neighbouring lands.\(^67\) In consequence, talented musicians were often wooed by several rulers,\(^68\) but it appears as though the Mongols offered them the best conditions: when al-Jamāl al-Mashriqi migrated to Egypt, he complained of

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\(^{64}\) E.g., Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 1:337–38.

\(^{65}\) *Igeret Ya’kov b. Eliyahu* (ca. 1263), as cited in Arnon, “The Mongols and the Jews,” 64 [In Hebrew].


\(^{67}\) As in the Mongol Empire, the primary functions of music in the Muslim world were entertainment and strengthening royal bona fides; Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, in his *Kitāb al-‘ibar*, 1:763–67; Idem (Rosenthal), *The Muqaddimah*, 2:401, 404. In Ibn Khaldūn’s estimation, however, music is a product of sedentary civilization. He also notes that it has been immensely popular among Persians from antiquity onwards, and, despite the Arabs’ initial reservations about music, the prospering caliphate welcomed singers from Persia and Byzantium. During the ‘Abbasid period, the Arabs indeed developed a refined and glorious musical tradition, which was still admired in the venerated historian’s own time. That said, in citing examples, he referred to the halcyon days of Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–193/786–809), and to singers like Ibrāhīm al-Mawsīlī (125/742–188/804) and his sons, and not the later ‘Abbasids (ibid., 1:765–66, idem (Rosenthal), *The Muqaddimah*, 2:404).

\(^{68}\) E.g., ‘Umari, *Masālik*, 10:364, 367, 373; 375, 408; and Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, 3:240. These sources describe how the rulers of India, Egypt, and Yemen sought to attract leading Ilkhanid
settling for crumbs after having grown accustomed to bread in the Ilkhanate. It is also worth noting that Chinese musicians performed in Iran during Ghazan's tenure and perhaps other periods as well. Likewise, many Muslim musicians, some of whom were probably from the Ilkhanate, found their way to Yuan China, the Delhi Sultanate, and Egypt. In fact, the Mamluks welcomed members of Urmawī's circle, especially after the Ilkhanate's fall. Yet another channel for musical exchange was imperial presents, as singing slave girls were often included in the bountiful gift packages that were exchanged between rulers. Since it was common for rulers and amīrs to have top-notch musicians instruct their slave girls, these sorts of exchanges were bound to enhance the transfer of 'high music' across the Eurasian continent.

The massive flow of people that informed the Mongol era naturally led to the dissemination of musical instruments. For example, miniatures attest to the presence of Chinese and European instruments in the Ilkhanate. Moreover, Rashīd al-Din informs us that the Chinese system of notation also made its way into this realm. Since Urmawī does not mention this phenomenon in the Risāla, it is difficult to ascertain whether he was aware of these transfers. The second generation of his circle was probably more cognizant of this development, as these musicians often jumped from one court to the next. This sort of diversity probably nourished the continued blossoming of music and musicology throughout the borders of the Ilkhanate.

players. For contemporaneous musicians in the Mamluk sultanate, see Neubauer, "Musik," 238–40.

69 ʿUmarī, Masālik, 10:396.

70 E.g., ʿUmarī, Masālik, 10:408; and Allsen, "Entertainers," 42–45.

71 E.g., Ibn Baṭṭūṭa mentions that the sultan of Delhi sent Hindu singing girls to the Yuan emperor; Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Voyages, 4:773; Idem (Gibb), 4:3; ʿUmarī, Masālik, 10:396, 375. For discussion of the gifts exchanged between Mongol and Mamluk dignitaries see Little, "Diplomatic Missions," 39.

72 E.g., ʿUmarī, Masālik, 10:396; and Ibn Ḥajar, Durar, 3:240.


75 E.g., ʿUmarī, Masālik, 10:396, 392, 402, 407; Ibn Ḥajar, Durar, 3:240; Şafādī, Ayān, 1:414–15. Of special interest is al-Jamāl al-Mashriqī's reference to an urdhul (a sort of reed pipe) that, in his estimation, was used by the Franks; ʿUmarī, Masālik, 10:407. For the influence of Chinese and Indian music on their Persian counterpart during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see Fallāhzadeh, Persian Writing, 206, 209, 216. The Chinese notation system, however, was not included in the Islamic theoretical musical literature.
Conclusion

As opposed to those writers who emphasize the catastrophic dimensions of the fall of Baghdad, Urmawī’s personal account reinforces the more mundane perspectives on this watershed event. The fate of this polymath, his oeuvre, and students in the post-conquest Ilkhanate also demonstrates that, at the very least, the Mongol triumph did not close the curtain on ‘Abbasid musical culture. In fact, due to its compatibility with the new regime’s indigenous norms and the open world that the empire created, this musical tradition continued to evolve, spread, and thrive under Mongol rule. What is more, it would have a tremendous impact on the later development of Islamic music in the Arab, Persian, and Turkish world.

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