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The Khurasani Elite and Migrant Scholars in Ilkhanid Baghdad

During Hülagü Khan's campaign in the West, and in the aftermath of the fall of the Baghdad Caliphate to the Mongol armies in 1258, the Caliphal lands underwent significant societal changes. While the bulk of the early research on this issue has been focused on the details of the Mongol campaign in Iraq, and the accounts of death and destruction in Baghdad, little attention has been paid to various other concurrent issues, such as social strife in Baghdad prior to the fall of the city or its transformation afterwards. One aspect of the early period that affected Baghdad particularly was the appointment of Ala al-Din Juwayni as the governor of Baghdad, which was itself part of a bigger shift. This shift involved, on a broader scope, the metamorphosis of the Juwayni family of administrators and other Khurasani elite into arms of the Mongol state, and their migration to the West with the center of Ilkhanid rule, subsequently occupying various high offices in the early period of the Ilkhanate.

Following the migration of the Khurasani elite to the centers of Ilkhanid rule, and establishing new centers of patronage, most notably Baghdad under Ala al-Din Juwayni, the new centers of patronage succeeded in attracting scholars from across the empire and beyond, and establishing new circles of scholarship. There even followed scholarly migration between various centers within the Ilkhanate, due to the precarious nature of the enterprise and the rapid rise and fall of centers of patronage. This paper is a first attempt to draw a picture of the extent and scope of the scholarly connections occasioned by the patronage of the Juwayni family, in particular resident and migrant scholars to Baghdad, under Ala al-Din's rule, and how Baghdad fared as a center of patronage for intellectual sciences in this period.