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*Mobility and Knowledge in the Mongol Empire: A Study of the “Mobile School” (al-Madrasa al-Sayyāra) of the Il-Ĥāns*

The history of post-Avicennan Arabic philosophy and Islamic theology, with few exceptions, has received little scholarly attention, and remains to this day largely virgin territory. This neglect is particularly true of its intellectual and institutional development during the Mongol Empire; specifically the period between Naṣīraddīn aṭ-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) and aṭ-Taftazānī (d. 791/1390). A major reason for this neglect is that many writings from this period, the majority of which are still unedited, were written in the style of paraphrases, abridgements (*muḥtaṣṣars*), commentaries (*ṣarḥs*), and glosses (*ḥāṣīyas*). As such, they are considered unoriginal compositions, unworthy of modern scholars’ attention. Such stylistic assumptions are misleading given the extent of the period, its geographical scope, and the large number of works and the institutions in which they were composed dating from this period that have yet to be studied. The focus of this paper will be to examine the institution of the *madrasa* in the Mongol Empire but with an emphasis on the “mobile school” (*al-madrasa al-sayyāra*) under the Il-Ĥāns. This school primarily served as a literary entourage that followed the Il-Ĥān, most notably Ulḡaytū, on his travels and military campaigns. The weight of the paper will be on the *madrasa* as the primary vehicle for the transmission, cross-cultural fertilization, and dissemination of philosophical and theological knowledge in the Mongol Empire; and on the *madrasa* as an example of the unstinting patronage which the Mongols displayed for knowledge to bring about one of the richest periods of Islamicate cultural and intellectual history.