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## THE RĀDHĀNITE MERCHANTS AND THE LAND OF RĀDHĀN

BY

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*The Rādhānites: From east to west.* It is now more than 100 years since Ibn Khurdādhbe's book was first edited, by the French orientalist Barbier de Meynard. Seventeen years before this first edition, the fragment dealing with the "Jewish merchants called Rādhānites" had been translated by another French orientalist, J. T. Reinaud, and thus brought to the attention of western scholarship. That fragment has since been the subject of a continuous discussion among scholars.

According to Ibn Khurdādhbe, who wrote around the middle of the ninth century, these Rādhānite merchants operated along several routes, stretching from the lands of *Firanjā* and *Andalus*, i.e. Western Europe, to China in the Far East. The ramifications of these routes reached to the center of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate as well as its periphery, the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, the northern parts of India (*Sind* and *Hind*), and Khurāsān. They even reached Constantinople, Antioch, and the Slavonic lands, beyond Byzantium (*al-Rūm*), the lands of the Khazars, the region of the Caspian Sea, and Transoxiana<sup>1</sup>). Six languages were spoken by these merchants: Arabic, Persian, Greek

1) See the fragment in Reinaud, *Géographie*, I, 58 ff.; ed. Barbier de Meynard, *JA*, VI-5 (1865), 115 ff.; ed. De Goeje, *BGA VI*, 153 f. There are many English translations of this fragment: Jacobs, *Jewish Contrib.*, 194 ff.; Adler, *Jew. Trav.*, 2; Lopez-Raymond, *Med. Tr.*, 31 f.; Katz, *The Jews*, 134; Rabinowitz, *JQR NS*, 35 (1944-45), 252 f.; Goitein, *Jews and Arabs*, 106; Serjeant, *Ars Islamica*, 15-16 (1968), 85; see French translations (besides Reinaud, Barbier de Meynard, and De Goeje) in Blachère's *Extraits*, 27 ff.; Hadj-Sadok, *Description*, 21 f. There is a Hebrew translation in Dinur's *Isr. in the Diasp.*, I-1, 366 f., and a German one, in Aronius, *Regesten*, no. 113. On Ibn Khurdādhbe see *inter alia* Hadj-Sadok's article in *Enc. of Isl.*<sup>2</sup>, III, 839 f.; Ashtor, *RSI*, 81 (1969), 455 ff. See praise of Ibn Khurdādhbe's work by the 15th century bibliographer, Sakhāwī (*I'lān*, 155 f.), who says that his successors copied from him and followed his path.

(*rūmīya*), *ifranjīya*, *andalusīya*, and Slavonic. Ibn Khurdādhbe also gives an account of the goods carried by them, from west to east: Slaves—male, female and juvenile; brocade, furs, and swords. From China they carried musk, aromatic wood (*ūd*, probably aloe), camphor, and cinnamon.

Though there are differences of scholarly opinion concerning various aspects of the fragment, there is relative unanimity as regards the land of origin of these merchants, namely Western Europe. Only Barbier de Meynard, the first publisher of the Arabic original, connected the Rādhānite merchants with what he called “the three *cantons* of Radān” (*sic*), which he locates in the eastern part of the *sawād*, as described by Ibn Khurdādhbe himself elsewhere in his work <sup>2</sup>). In fact, in his table of the districts, their revenue and taxes due, Ibn Khurdādhbe mentions only one district of Rādhān, on the eastern shore of the Tigris. Barbier de Meynard’s knowledge about three districts named Rādhān must have come from one of the sources discussed below in this article.

The first scholar to suggest western origin of these merchants was Heyd, in 1879, in the German, first version of his *Histoire du commerce du Levant* <sup>3</sup>). It is true, he says, that to carry out such expeditions at that time one had to possess geographical knowledge of a kind which was then available only in the Arabic world, primarily in its very center, Baghdad. What made it possible for (western) Jewish merchants to operate in this way was the existence of a chain of Jewish communities, stretching from Spain to China. Carolingian conditions were very favorable for such travel.

A short time before Heyd wrote down these considerations, also in 1879, De Goeje published his *Glossarium* to the first three volumes of Arabic geographers edited by him. Relying upon the version of Ibn al-Faḳīh (see below) and the spelling found there, *rāhdānīya*, De Goeje showed that this word also has the meaning of “cloth merchants” (*baḡḡāz*) and is probably borrowed from Persian, deriving from *rāb* + *dān*, as noted by Dozy in his *Supplément*. Dozy was not the first to explain

<sup>2</sup>) Cf. *JA*, VI-5 (1865), § 12 f.; *ibid.*, 34, 240; *BGA*, VI, 12.

<sup>3</sup>) Cf. Heyd, I, 127.



*rāhdān* as “cloth merchant”, according to the above-mentioned Persian etymology (which, by the way, is not attested by any Persian sources <sup>4</sup>). This opinion, that the term *Rahdānīya* had a Persian etymology, had already been expressed in 1848 by Reinaud <sup>5</sup>) (he explained it as *connaiss-seurs de chemin*); but Dozy may have arrived at this conclusion independently. Marquart, in 1903, accepted it, too <sup>6</sup>).

In 1907, Schipper stated that Ibn Khurdādhbe's fragment was very clear evidence of the fact that Jewish merchants from the West used to reach all parts of the then known world <sup>7</sup>). In an article published five years later, he added the explanation that Oriental Jews were at that time chiefly farmers and artisans. The few of them engaged in business confined themselves to the territory of the Caliphate. To view them as traders with the distant countries of Western Europe would therefore be a quite impossible thing <sup>8</sup>).

Also in 1907, in an article on the economic position of Jews in the Middle Ages, based of course on Ibn Khurdādhbe, Julius Guttman stressed the importance of western Jews, not only in connecting the two parts of the world, i.e. Islam and Christendom, but even in the internal economic life of the Caliphate <sup>9</sup>).

A third article published the same year, 1907, by Simonsen, made an attempt to find a new interpretation of the term *Rādhānīya*. He denied Barbier de Meynard's suggestion that the merchants were from the district of Rādhān, since, he said, the point of departure of their routes as described by Ibn Khurdādhbe was France. He therefore suggested considering them the successors of the merchants that had sailed to the

4) Cf. De Goeje, *BGA* IV, 251. Muqaddasi, *BGA* III, 30, 225 (*bāb al-rahādīna*, in Qayrawān). Cf. Dozy, *Suppl.*, I, 562b. See on *rahādīna* (= *rahādīra*) in expressions such as *sūq al-r.*, Fagnan, *Chronique*, 188, n. 3; Brunschvig, *Berberie*, I, 364; II, 204 (his translation is “marchands d'étoffe”); see also Roy-Poinssot, *Inscr. ar.*, no. 159 (pp. 279 f.), l. 8, the tomb of 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Sa'd *al-rahdār*; see also *ibid.*, 280, n. 3; 281. Cf. also Hirschberg, *Horeb*, 14-15 (1959-60), 106.

5) Reinaud, *Géogr.*, 58, n. 1.

6) Marquart, *Streifzüge*, 24. He assumed that their base was in Spain, *ibid.*, 350.

7) Schipper, *Anfänge*, 18.

8) Schipper, *Heimkehr*, 141.

9) Guttman, *MGWJ*, 51 (1907), 264, n. 1.

Orient in ancient times from the Rhone river, and were supposedly called (*nautae*) *Rhodanici*, from which *rahdāniya* or whatever other variants of this name, as found in the manuscripts <sup>10</sup>).

De Goeje objected to this view, in 1908, showing the impossibility of the shift  $o > ā$  (Rhodanus > Rādhān), and maintaining the Persian origin of the word. He accepted, however, that the Rādhāniya came from Southern France and from Spain <sup>11</sup>). That they were from the West was also accepted by Aronius, following Heyd <sup>12</sup>).

There were two scholars, as far as I could find, who tried to return the Rādhāniya to the Orient, specifically to Rayy (Rhages) in Media, which was an important commercial center. Indeed Ibn al-Faqīh (see below) includes his paraphrase of the fragment under discussion in his description of Rayy. The two scholars were Jacobs (1919) and Katz (1937); the latter, however, expressed doubts and added that the chain of Jewish settlements between Spain and China would have enabled Jews from Western Europe as well to undertake such travels <sup>13</sup>). The etymology Rayy-Rādhāniya in itself is impossible, since a man from Rayy would be called al-Rāzī <sup>14</sup>).

Fischel touched briefly upon this topic (1937), only to state that we have not enough source material to enable us to know whether there was any connection between the forerunners of the famous Baghdadi Jewish bankers of the tenth century, and "these Jewish merchants of the ninth century coming from the West" <sup>15</sup>).

The topic reappeared in scholarly discussion in 1944, when Rabinowitz published a paper contending that the description of the Rādhānites

<sup>10</sup>) Simonsen, *REJ*, 54 (1907), 141. The same opinion is held also by Dinur, *Isr. in the Diasp.*, I (1), 366. Cf. the bibliography on the *nautae Rhodanici* given by Kmietowicz, *Fol. Or.*, 11 (1970), 166, n. 10.

<sup>11</sup>) De Goeje, *Opuscula*, IV, 6 ff.

<sup>12</sup>) Aronius, *Regesten*, no. 113, p. 50.

<sup>13</sup>) See Jacobs, *Jew. Contr.*, 196 f.; Katz, *Jews*, 134 f., who also has details on the use made of Ibn Khurdādhbe's fragment in support of some hypotheses concerning economic relations between the Franks and the Orient. Starr, *J. in the Byz. Emp.*, 33, also thought (1939), that they "were apparently Orientals", without giving his reasons.

<sup>14</sup>) So also Kmietowicz, *Fol. Or.*, 11 (1970), 167.

<sup>15</sup>) Fischel, *Jews*, 31 f., n. 4.



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should be considered an authentic description of one segment of the system of international economic relations of that period, giving an accurate picture of the role played by the Jews and their position in economic life. While accepting the famous Persian etymology of their name, he suggested that they were in fact an association of merchants, of various origins; this should give us the key to their polyglottism and the extreme ramification of their routes<sup>16</sup>). His book, published three years later, includes an exhaustive discussion of different aspects of Ibn Khurdādhbe's description as compared with other pertinent information found in both European and Jewish sources. He replied in the affirmative to the question of whether it was at all possible that Jews travelled unhindered such enormous distances, from Christian to Muslim lands and back, pointing out that such activity had subsisted for many generations; even in the times of the Crusaders when there was such a deterioration in the relations between these two parts of the world, Jews kept travelling from the one to the other<sup>17</sup>).

In his 1951 review of Rabinowitz's book, Cl. Cahen criticized it for the scarcity of the parallels provided in reference to the economic activities of Oriental Jews; still, he did not contradict the view that the Rādhānites belonged to the West, while expressing his preference for the Persian etymology of their name<sup>18</sup>). Thirteen years later, in 1964<sup>19</sup>), Cahen stressed the fact that Oriental people were not active in Western Europe, whereas it is Jews from the West who maintained economic connections between the Muslim and the Christian areas. Muslim rulers, he said, were not too much interested in commerce with the West, and the Fāṭimids, for instance, very much like the Byzantines, preferred to have people from the West come and trade with them, not vice versa.

That same year, 1964, Cahen published another article, expressing far-reaching doubts concerning the trustworthiness of various details in

16) Rabinowitz, *JQR NS*, 35 (1944-45), 253 f.; 278 f.

17) Rabinowitz, *Jew. Merch.*, 93-111. Following Rabinowitz, Goitein, *Jews and Arabs*, 107, assumes that the headquarters of the Rādhānites were in Christian Europe.

18) Cahen, *RH*, 205 (1951), 119.

19) Cahen, *Settimane*, 12 (1964), 423 ff.

Ibn Khurdādhbe's account, and pointing out difficulties in regard to some stations on the routes of these merchants, among them Faramā (ancient Pelusium), described as a main transit point from the Mediterranean to Qulzum, whereas it is not confirmed that it still served as port under the Muslims<sup>20</sup>). In a more specific and precise manner, Cahen lastly formulated five questions concerning the Rādhānites, referring to (1) the nature of these merchants, whether they were one body, or several groups, according to the languages and fragments of routes; (2) the fact that Ibn Khurdādhbe describes the routes as being "of Jewish merchants" whereas they were used by anybody; (3) the fact that the name Rādhānites is not mentioned in any other source; (4) the lack of any parallel evidence in western sources, Jewish or non-Jewish; (5) the lack of knowledge of the Far East in that period in Europe, where these merchants lived<sup>21</sup>). I hope that, at least partly, some of these questions will be answered by the present study, either directly or indirectly.

Acceptance of the view that Ibn Khurdādhbe considered the Jews European merchants par excellence is also to be found in an article of C. Roth, published in 1966<sup>22</sup>).

M. Lombard, in his posthumous book, published in 1971, still considers the Rādhānites to have been based in various cities of the region Meuse-Saône-Rhône. He also prefers to understand this name as connected with the Rhone river<sup>23</sup>).

These last years, two hypotheses have been proffered to explain who the Rādhānites were and what their name meant. Unfortunately,

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20) Cahen, *REJ*, 123 (1964), 499. Cf. Goitein, *Tarbiz*, 36 (1966-67), 366. Scepticism concerning the impact of Ibn Khurdādhbe's account on hypotheses concerning the role of the Jews in medieval international trade, was expressed earlier, in 1960, by Blumenkranz, *Juifs et Chrétiens*, 13 f. That Faramā was still active under the Muslims has been shown by Ashtor, *JESHO*, 13 (1970), 183 f. and Jacobi, *Der Islam*, 47 (1971), 256 f.

21) Cahen, *Der Islam*, 48 (1971), 333. I am grateful to Prof. Blumenkranz, for calling my attention to this paper.

22) Roth, *Dark Ages*, 25.

23) *L'Islam*, 290 ff.; see also the map, no. 24, after p. 213. Unfortunately, his often quoted "route de la mente" (*L'Art mosan*, 1959), has not been available to me.

neither of these seems to be very well founded. The first is that of Kmietowicz, who in a 1970 article suggested that the term Rādhāniya comes from *veredarii*, i.e. couriers. Since these merchants, he says, sometimes served also as diplomatical messengers (like the famous Isaac of the time of Hārūn al-Rashīd) or translators, this designation was applied to them. The term *veredarius* itself comes from *raeda* (*rheda*), a four-wheeled carriage used in Gaul by the imperial mail service; and *veredus*, a post-horse. Thus the development of the term was *veredarii* > *rēdārii* > *rēdhānī[ya]*<sup>24</sup>).

Jacobi tries to prove, in an 1971 article, that the term should be understood as meaning 'spies', working for the 'Abbāsīd secret service. Ibn Khurdādhbe was himself, as is well known, *ṣāhib al-barīd wa'l-khabar*, i.e., the man in charge of the mail and of that service<sup>25</sup>).

To sum up briefly this review of the research done in the course of more than a century by so many prominent and devoted scholars, almost all scholars (with the exception of Barbier de Meynard) turned their backs on Rādhān. Except for the Rayy hypothesis, the generally accepted view has been that these merchants belonged to Western Europe. The main reasons for taking this view were a) the Ibn al-Faqīh version which had Rādhāniya instead of Rādhāniya; b) considerations concerning the socio-economical structure of Oriental Jewry (Schipper); c) the fact that Ibn Khurdādhbe's starting point in the description of the routes was France (Simonsen and others).

As will be seen further, the present study shows, I believe, that these merchants were exactly what Ibn Khurdādhbe called them, i.e. Rādhānites, and that Ibn Khurdādhbe's account is altogether a very trustworthy one. We will have to consider the following points: The relative value of the sources; the point of departure and other details of the routes; the meaning of *Firanja*; details in the description of the wares; the land of the Rādhānites, i.e. Rādhān.

24) Kmietowicz, *Fol. Or.*, 11 (1970), 169 f.

25) Jacobi, *Der Islam*, 47 (1971), 262.



*The relative value of the sources.* The text of Ibn al-Faḳīh <sup>26</sup>) is clearly of minor importance. Whereas his book itself was written around 900, i.e. some two generations later than that of Ibn Khurdādhbe, what we have at our disposal is in fact its abridged version, as written by ‘Alī b. Ja‘far al-Shayzarī in A.H. 413 (= 1022) <sup>27</sup>), i.e. almost 200 years later than Ibn Khurdādhbe’s book. However, the possibility that Ibn al-Faḳīh did not take his version from Ibn Khurdādhbe, should not be excluded; he might have transcribed and possibly epitomized, the same, apparently Syriac source used by his predecessor.

This presumption rests upon the word which is the very crux of the description, Rādhāniya. However different this name is in Ibn al-Faḳīh, it is still Rādhāniya, i.e. it has the same pattern as Rādhāniya; it is not Rahādina, as is the plural of *rahdān* (“cloth merchant”). Thus the only difference is the inserted *h*; and there is the version *rahdāniya* also (i.e. without the *mater lectionis* after the *r*). This is in all probability based on Syriac *rhadban*. It is only natural that a Syriac text should have this variant of *radhan*. The Syriac usage, especially in proper nouns, was to write a *h* after a *r*, as Rhūmī for Rūmī. The Greek *spiritus asper* lies behind this usage; Aramaic also has a well known preference for the insertion of a *h* into other forms too, such as *bhs* for *b’s*; *hṭ’* for *ṭd*. There is also the instance of *rhṭ* (to run) <sup>28</sup>). It is only to be expected, then, that a Syriac scribe sometimes wrote *rhadban* instead of *radhan*.

Ibn Khurdādhbe states that these merchants carried their goods from the Maghrib, i.e. Muslim Spain, and visited *Firanja* on their way. Not so in Ibn al-Faḳīh’s epitomizer, who makes *Firanja* the source of those goods. The latter also skips many details in the description of the routes. He never mentions, for instance, *al-baḥr al gharbī*, the Mediterranean; he skips the Arabian Peninsula, Constantinople, ‘Umān, Sind-Hind, Sūs al-aqṣā, Ṭanja, Ifriqiya, Miṣr, Ramla, Damascus, Kūfa, Baṣra, Ahwāz, Fārs, Kirmān, the lands of the Slavons, Balkh, and Transoxiana.

<sup>26</sup>) See Ibn al-Faḳīh’s version in *BGA* V, 270. On Ibn al-Faḳīh al-Hamadānī see the article of H. Massé in *Enc. of Isl.*, III, 761 f.; Ashtor, *RSI*, 81 (1969), 460 f.

<sup>27</sup>) Cf. De Goeje in *BGA* V, pp. VI ff. and 330, note k.

<sup>28</sup>) Cf. Nöldeke, *Syr. Gr.*, 26; Duval, *Traité*, 37.

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He does not mention the details concerning the land of the Khazars, which Ibn Khurdādhbe does, nor those concerning the Caspian Sea ("sea of Jurjān"); of the six languages spoken by these merchants he leaves out Andalusian and Slavonic, while changing the order of the other ones; he also fails to mention several of the trade goods, e.g. slaves, etc. The inferiority of Ibn al-Faqīh's text is shown by the following table:

	<i>Ibn Khurdādhbe</i>	<i>Ibn al-Faqīh</i>
1. Designation	The Jewish merchants al-Rādhāniya	The Jewish merchants al-Rāh-dāniya (variant: Rahdāniya)
2. Languages	Arabic, Persian, Rūmiya, Ifranjiya, Andalusian, Slavonic	Persian, Rūmiya, Arabic, Ifranjiya
3. Source of western wares	Maghrib	Firanja
4. Routes:		
a)	Maghrib-Firanja-western sea-Faramā-caravans to Qulzum (25 farsakhs)-eastern sea-Jār-Jidda-Sind-Hind-China	Firanja-Faramā-Qulzum-the sea-China
b)	(Maghrib)-Firanja-western sea-Antioch-Jābiya(?)-Euphrates-Baghdad-Tigris-Ubulla-'Umān-Sind-Hind-China	Faramā-Antioch-Baghdad-Ubulla
c)	Andalus or Firanja-Sūs al-aqṣā-Ṭanja-Ifriqiya-Miṣr-Ramla-Damascus-Kūfa-Baghdad-Baṣra-Ahwāz-Fārs-Kirmān-Sind-Hind-China	
d)	Hinterland of Byzantium-land of the Slavons-sea of Jurjān-Balkh-Transoxiana-Wurut-Tughuz Ghuzz	Armenia, Adharbayjān, Khurāsān, land of the Khazars, and Jurjān are mentioned before the fragment
e)	Faramā-Constantinople	
f)	Faramā-Firanja	
5. Wares carried from the Maghrib (I. Kh.) or from Firanja (I.F.)	Slaves (men, women, children), brocade, hides of <i>khaṣṣ</i> , furs, <i>sammīr</i> , swords	Brocade, <i>khaṣṣ</i>
6. Wares carried from China	Musk, 'ūd, camphor, cinnamon	Cinnamon and other, undefined goods

*Details of the routes*<sup>29</sup>). Contrarily to what was believed, and found in all translations of Ibn Khurdādhbe's fragment except Serjeant's<sup>30</sup>), the text, as printed by De Goeje, puts the east first, not the west<sup>31</sup>). Ibn Khurdādhbe did not record any details on goods that were perhaps carried from the Eastern Caliphate outside, to the West. This is only natural, since both his and his readers' interest lay in what came from a far country. It was the Rādhānite Jewish merchants who brought those exquisite rarities both from the West and from China. They sold them not only within the territory of the Caliphate, but also in the Byzantine lands and Firanja.

The mention of *Jār* and *Jidda*, i.e. respectively the ports which connected Medina and Mecca with the outside world, shows that Jews were allowed to enter Ḥijāz, which 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb expelled them from some 200 years earlier, following the will of the Prophet. There are mentions of Jews in Wādī'l-Qurā in the eleventh century<sup>32</sup>). This detail in Ibn Khurdādhbe confirms the tradition mentioned by Mālik b. Anas, that 'Umar gave Jews, Christians, and *Majūs* permission to stay in Medina three days in order to get supplies<sup>33</sup>). It also supports the

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29) The rest of this paper will include mainly remarks not found in earlier studies. All works on the Rādhānites mentioned above contain valuable explanations on different points of Ibn Khurdādhbe's account. To these should be added Lewicki, *Żródła*, 119-152. Concerning the region of the Caspian Sea and the lands of the Khazars, cf. Lopez-Raymond, 33, n. 77; Marquart, *Streifzüge*, 80; Poliak, *Kazariya*, 68 f.

30) See n. 1 above.

31) The MS. used by De Goeje for his edition of Ibn Khurdādhbe's work is now at the Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, and is catalogued Mixt. 783. Cf. H. Loebenstein, *Katalog der arabischen Handschriften der Österr. Nationalbibliothek*, I, (Vienna 1970), no. 2403. I am most grateful to Dr. Helene Loebenstein, director of the papyri collection at the Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, for sending me information on this point, and providing me with a photostat of fol. 64v of the MS., where one can see that east comes before west, as transcribed by De Goeje.

32) Cf. queries they sent in around 1000, Ginzberg, *Geonica*, II, 54, 61. See TS 13 J 16, f. 14, l. 20, ed. Mann, *Jews*, II, 129 ff., which mentions a certain Isaac from Wādī'l-Qurā, dwelling in 'Ammān. Cf. *ibid.*, I, 118 and Mann, *JQR NS*, 7 (1916-17), 489. As appears from some Muslim sources, Jews from Wādī'l-Qurā were not expelled, since it was considered part of Palestine (al-Shām), cf. Wāqidī, 711; Samhūdī, II, 388 f.

33) Mālik, *Muwatta'*, no. 873, p. 311 f.



story that Muṣ'ab b. al-Zubayr toured Medina together with the son of the exilarch (*ra's al-jālūt*; ca. 690)<sup>34</sup>).

*Ubullā* is most probably identical with Hūvlāt, mentioned in Gaonic responsa<sup>35</sup>). It stood not far from Baṣra, where the Ubulla canal reached the Tigris, near its mouth<sup>36</sup>). The canal still served as an important water-way during the first half of the tenth century<sup>37</sup>). An interesting parallel to what is said in Ibn Khurdādhbe is found in Ya'qūbī, who reported that ships called *khayṭiya* constructed at Ubulla, called at (Sijil-) Māsa in the region of Sūs al-aqṣā, whence they travelled further, to China<sup>38</sup>).

The route through the land of the Berbers (see route c in the table above) presents some especially interesting points. The fact that Ibn Khurdādhbe's description of it begins from *Andalus* shows that it is that country which was the main destination of the merchants. It is also from here that one can infer the identity between Maghrib and Andalus, i.e. Muslim Spain, since in the previous paragraphs we are told that they went to the Maghrib and got their wares there. From Andalus they passed on to Sūs al-aqṣā, whereas some of them, who had made a detour to *Firanja* (probably Italy, as will be shown below), arrived directly by sea in Sūs al-aqṣā from that country. That region of Southern Morocco was considered *aqṣā*, i.e. distant; a Gaonic responsum says, referring to "the land of the Berbers", that "it is a distant place and the caravans are infrequent"<sup>39</sup>). The travels of the Rādhānites to that region were

34) Samhūdī, II, 72.

35) See the unidentified MS. from the Taylor-Schechter collection ed. by Ginzberg, *Geonica*, II, 212 f., ll. 14, 15, 22, 23. See also Mann, *JQR NS*, 7 (1916-17), 470; Obermeyer, *Landschaft*, 267.

36) Le Strange, *Lands*, 44.

37) Tanūkhī, *Nishwār*, I, 215.

38) Al-Ya'qūbī, *BGA VII*, 360. On the *khayṭiya* ships, so called probably because ropes and wires were used in their construction, cf. De Goeje, *BGA*, VIII, p. XX; al-Azdī, 107, l. 17, and the note of Mez, *ibid.*, p. LXIII; Kindermann, 26. For mentions of *khayṭiya* ships in Geniza documents, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, I, 295 f., and 474, n. 8, where additional references are also listed. According to Goitein, *ibid.*, the right pronunciation was *khīṭiya*.

39) Cf. *Otzar Hageonim*, to *Yevāmōt*, 34.

apparently related to furs (see further, on *khaṣṣ sūsi*) and clothes <sup>40</sup>). Ibn Ḥawqal tells us that in Sūs al-aqṣā there was a colony of "people from Iraq, and merchants from Baṣra, Kūfa, and Baghdadians"; he further describes the frequency of their caravans and their immense profits <sup>41</sup>).

*Ifriqiya* of our fragment is sometimes explained as Qayrawān. In fact, it had many meanings. A Gaonic responsum speaks about "Qayrawān which is in the land of Ifriqiya" <sup>42</sup>). A Christian source mentions "Ifriqiya which is in the five cities" (i.e. Pentapolis, Libya) <sup>43</sup>).

*The meaning of Firanja.* There is no certainty that this "land of the Franks" in Ibn Khurdādhbe necessarily meant France. It rather seems to have meant primarily that part of Italy which was under Frankish rule. We learn from an Arabic source that in those days Bertha, the daughter of Lothar "queen of *Ifranja*", sent the caliph al-Muktafi (902-908), in A.H. 293 (= 906), *inter alia*, swords, 20 Slavonic slaves and 20 Slavonic slave-girls, etc. (Bertha was then the wife of Adalbert, ruler of the mark of Toscana) <sup>44</sup>). Ibn al-Nadīm (10th century), who also cites the story of the relations between Bertha, queen of *Firanja* and al-Muktafi, tells that he himself saw the Frankish swords (*al-firanjiya*) which had inscriptions on them in the writing of Firanja (by which

40) Cf. al-Idrisī, 62, on the cloth industries of Sūs-al-aqṣā, that have no equal in the entire world.

41) Ibn Ḥawqal, *BGA*, II, 61. It may be assumed that this description, which is from ca. 950, also refers to Jewish merchants; Arabic authors sometimes skipped this detail, as for instance Maqrīzī, in *Khitaṭ*, I, 213, who omits the word *al-yahūd* when quoting Ibn Khurdādhbe's account of the Rādhānites. Canard, in *Hespéris*, 39 (1952), 297, note, suggests that some of the Ismā'īli influence in North Africa might have stemmed from these economic relations between Southern Iraq and Sijilmāsa.

42) *Otzar Hageonim*, to *Ketubbōt*, 162.

43) *Synax. jacob.*, 43.

44) Ibn al-Zubayr, *Dhakḥā'ir*, 48 f. Cf. Levi della Vida's article in *RSI*, 66 (1954), which deals with these connections, based on Arabic sources published by M. Hamidullah. The widow of Theobald, count of Arles, Bertha, married Adalbert ("the Rich") ca. 895, and remained ruler of Toscana from his death (915) to her own (8 March 925); cf. Mor, *L'Età*, I, 47, 57, 73, 82, 90 n. 17.



Latin letters are meant)<sup>45</sup>). Al-Iṣṭakhri says that Sicily is so near to *Ifranja* that the latter can be seen from it<sup>46</sup>).

*Details in the description of the trade goods.* Gaonic literature contains sufficient information about trade in slaves<sup>47</sup>), as well as in articles of clothing, aromatic substances, etc., to contradict Schipper's view of the minor role played by Oriental Jews in international trade. Jewish magnates in tenth century Baghdad, like the sons of Neṭirā and others, could certainly not have been a sudden development. There must have been a continuous tradition of such families, or groups. The story of Nathan ha-Bavli and other scattered information, indicate the existence of such a class and the growing importance of its position, both social and financial. Families and individuals such as Menashē Ibn al-Qazzāz ("the silk merchant"), Ya'qūb b. Killis, the Tustarī brothers, etc., whom we know from a later period, thanks to Arabic sources and to the Geniza documents, also seem to belong to this class of Jewish great merchants and financial experts<sup>48</sup>).

45) Ibn al-Nadim, *Fihrist*, I, 20.

46) Al-Iṣṭakhri, *BGA*, I, 70. I cannot understand how Jacobi inferred from this passage that *Ifranja* meant Southern France, cf. *Der Islam*, 47 (1971), 256. The information about Sicily being near to *Ifranja* is repeated in brief also by Ibn Ḥawqal, *BGA*, II, 203.

47) See Assaf's article in *Zion*, 4:91, 1939-40, reprinted in *Bebolei Ya'akov*, 223-256. On the trade with slaves as one of the important aspects of economic relations between Islamic lands and Europe, see Cahen, *Settimane*, 12 (1964), 412 ff.; Ashtor, *JESHO*, 13 (1970), 175-180. See the section on slaves in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, I, 130-147. See the discussion on the role of the Jewish merchants in the castration of slaves, following reports in Ibn Ḥawqal, *BGA*, II, 110, and Muqaddasī, *BGA*, III, 242. The discussion starts with Dozy, *Histoire*, II, 154, who in addition to the two Arabic sources, related the Jews also to a fragment in Liudprandus, bishop of Cremona (Antapodosis, *Mon. Germ. Hist., Scriptores*, III, 328) which mentions the great profits of the *Verdunenses mercatores* from trade in castrated slaves (while explaining that the Greeks call such a castrated youngster *carzimasium*); but this latter source does not mention Jews at all. Cf. Baron, *JRHJ*, IV, 334, n. 54. See also Lévi-Provençal, *Esp. mus.*, II, 124 f., Roth, *Dark Ages*, 27 ff. and the bibliographical notes, *ibid.*, 386, nn. 14-20. I do not see any specific reason to doubt the information of the above mentioned Muslim sources. What is important for our topic is the unanimity of all sources in pointing out Muslim Spain as the main base of this trade, which is completely in accordance with Ibn Khurdādhbe's account.

48) See the extensive material from Geniza sources on commerce and finance, as



Jewish trade in textiles, hides, and furs, is echoed in Gaonic sources. Trade in clothes made of the "wool of rabbits" (*arnāvim*) is mentioned in a responsum of Naṭrūnay Gaon (b. Hillāy, 847-855). Such wool is given there as an example of luxury merchandise which has no fixed price. It is this cloth which is called *khazẓ*, in Ibn Khurdādhbe<sup>49</sup>). We have seen that this item might have been one of the purposes of the long journey to Sūs al-aqṣā.

The caliph al-Ma'mūn sent *khazẓ sūsi* to "the king of India"<sup>50</sup>). 100 scarfs (*miṭraf*) of *khazẓ* are mentioned as a gift in A.H. 358 (= 969)<sup>51</sup>). *Khazẓ* was probably carried from Slavonic lands too, as shown by *khazẓ ṣaqlabī*<sup>52</sup>). Gilded *khazẓ* garments were brought from Muslim Spain<sup>53</sup>). When the vizier Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim al-Karkhī was deposed, on 8 Shawwāl 324 (29 Aug. 936), he was found to have 324 loads of *khazẓ*, whose markings showed that they had been kept for 40 years<sup>54</sup>).

*Sammūr* is translated as marten, or sable, and identified as *Mustella Zibelina*. Hats (*qalānis*) of *sammūr* were sent to the caliph al-Mu'taḍid (892-902) in A.H. 280 (= 893) by Ismā'īl b. Aḥmad al-Samanī, the

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described in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, I, ch. iii. Among the goods traded by one of the important Jewish merchants of the first half of the 11th century we find silk, different fabrics and clothes, cinnamon, aloe, camphor, musk, hides, furs (*ibid.*, 154) all of which occur in Ibn Khurdādhbe's description, too.

49) *Hemdā gen.*, no. 82, p. 16a. Though *arnāvim* is apparently used to mean *khazẓ* in this responsum, a Shī'ite tradition stipulates that a person is allowed to pray while dressed in clothes of *khazẓ*, provided it is pure and not mixed with *arānib* (rabbits). See Ibn Babawayh (d. 991), 357.

50) Ibn al-Zubayr, *Dhakhā'ir*, 27.

51) *Ibid.*, 66.

52) *Ibid.*, 74.

53) *Ibid.*, 75, 81.

54) *Ibid.*, 189. In a later period *khazẓ* became a synonym of *ibrisam* and *ḥarīr*, i.e. silk (also *qazẓ*); cf. al-Suyūṭī (*Durr*), and Ibn al-Athīr, *Nihāya*, I, 292. The latter notes that previously this designation used to be applied to cloth made from a mixture of wool and silk. The "wool of rabbits" (*arnāvim*) mentioned in the responsum of Naṭrūnay Gaon quoted above suggests that perhaps the *khazẓ* of Ibn Khurdādhbe was used to make this mixed fabric. See also Lévi Provençal, *Esp. mus.*, III, 310, n. 3. 1500 garments made of different kinds of colored *khazẓ maghribī* are mentioned in the *Dhakhā'ir* of Ibn Zubayr, 69.

ruler of Transoxiana <sup>55</sup>). This kind of fur was also used for the lining of garments <sup>56</sup>) and shoes, especially the kind of Persian shoes known as *khuff* (*khifāf*) <sup>57</sup>).

A hint of the relations of the Rādhānites with China is perhaps preserved in the business letter of a Jewish merchant, written in Persian, around A.D. 718, which was discovered in the border area of Western China, in the ruins of Khūṭān <sup>58</sup>). The aromatic substances brought from China were quite famous. When the caliph al-Ma'mūn wanted to find out which goods were the most highly prized in Byzantium, so that he could send them as gift to its king, he was told *misk* and *sammūr*. He immediately ordered 200 *raṭls* of *misk* and 200 hides of *sammūr* to be prepared <sup>59</sup>). 800 *manns* of "green odoriferous wood" (*al-ʿūd al-akhḍar*), 420 *manns* of *misk* and more than 60 *manns* of camphor were found among the treasures of the vizier Ibn al-Furāt at his first deposition, in A.H. 299 (911-912) <sup>60</sup>). A Gaonic responsum says that China was the

<sup>55</sup>) Ibn Zubayr, *Dhakhāʾir*, 42. On trade in furs, cf. Ashtor, *JESHO*, 13 (1970), 189 ff. On *sammūr*, see Serjeant, *Isl. Text.*, ch. 24, *Ars Isl.*, 15-16 (1968); according to al-Jāhiz, *Ḥayawān*, V, 483 f., both *khazz* (*khuzar*) and *sammūr* belong to the category of animals whose hides supply hair for production of clothing. See the editor's note 5, *ibid.*; *sammūr*, says al-Damiri, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān*, II, 30, is exquisite both in quality and colors; kings and men of mark use it for their robes. See also al-Mustawfi al-Qazwini, *Nuḥḥat al-qulūb*, 25 f. of the Arabic text, who says that *sammūr* fur is the most expensive.

<sup>56</sup>) 4000 robes (*jubba*) made of *khazz* lined with *sammūr* were found among the treasures of Hārūn al-Rashīd, cf. Ibn Zubayr, *Dhakhāʾir*, 214.

<sup>57</sup>) This is what is called *naʿal sindī* in a Gaonic responsum, where the word SWLYYS is explained (*B.T.*, *Qiddūshin*, 14b), cf. *Otzar Hageonim*, *Qiddūshin*, 206. The treasures of Hārūn al-Rashīd noted above included also 4000 pairs *khifāf*, mostly lined with *sammūr*, Ibn al-Zubayr, *Dhakhāʾir*, 218. See on *khuff* also al-Jāhiz, *Bayān*, III, 72 f.; Dozy, *Vêtements*, 155-159; Canard, *Translation of al-Ṣūlī*, 163, n. 6.

<sup>58</sup>) See Margoliouth, *JRAS*, 1903, 735; see also B. Utas, *Orientalia Suecana*, 17 (1968), and the bibliography given by him on pp. 123 f.; cf. Fischel, *Hist. Jud.*, 7 (1945), 48. Since Fischel considered the Rādhānites to be Europeans, he quoted this letter as parallel to Ibn Khurdādhbe's account without assuming the possibility of a direct connection between the Persian speaking Rādhānites and this letter.

<sup>59</sup>) Ibn al-Zubayr, *Dhakhāʾir*, 28.

<sup>60</sup>) 1 *Mann* = 2 *raṭls*, cf. Hinz, *Masse*, 16; see the story in Ibn Zubayr, *Dhakhāʾir*, 331. On camphor and its uses, cf. al-Qazwini, *ʿAjāib*, II, 26. Cf. Rabinowitz, *Jew. Merch.*, 70 f. See the discussion on some of these wares in Heyd, *Commerce*, II, 563 f.; 581-585 (*ʿūd*); 590-595 (*kāfir*, *daršin*); 636-640 (*misk*).



place spices like ginger (*ṣangbīlā*) and cinnamon (*darṣīn*) were brought from <sup>61</sup>).

We thus see that Ibn Khurdādhbe gave us an account of commercial routes that were famous in his days, though he possibly copied it from a slightly earlier source <sup>62</sup>). It was only natural for him to tell his readers along which routes those generally coveted rare luxury goods were carried; but, as already shown above, his point of departure was the Eastern Caliphate. It is Jews living in this part of the world who were the carriers of those goods. Many details in his account are attested also by parallel sources, some of which have been quoted above. The role of the Jews is proven both by parallel Gaonic sources and by the existence of well known families and groups of Jewish traders and financiers in later generations, as attested by the Geniza material and some Muslim sources.

*The land of the Rādhānites, i.e. Rādhān.* We have already seen that in all probability Rādhān and Rāhdān are only variant spellings of a geographical name. The fact that the plain possibility that these merchants belonged to Rādhān was neglected is due in part to the way some later Muslim sources describe this place. Thus al-Bakrī (d. 1094) describes Rādhān as one of the villages in the *Sawād* (i.e., the southern part of Iraq) <sup>63</sup>). This is what he understood by the concept of “the *sawād* of Baghdad”, i.e. the region of Baghdad. As will be shown further, Rādhān was the ancient name of that region <sup>64</sup>). Ibn al-Athīr even says that Rādhān is a village in Baghdad! So also al-Suyūṭī <sup>65</sup>). Steinschneider agreed with these views and considered Rādhān a village in the Sawād,

61) See Assaf, *Resp.*, 160 (referring to *ṣangbīlā* and *darṣīnā* mentioned in *B.T., Shabbāt*, 65a). The fact that the items listed in Ibn Khurdādhbe’s account were the most expensive and desirable is stressed also by Ashtor, *JESHO*, 13 (1970), 187 f.

62) Goitein, *Jews and Arabs*, 107, considers the activities of the Rādhānites to be a continuation of pre-Islamic Jewish trade.

63) Al-Bakrī, *Muʿjam*, I, 626.

64) *Sawād* also means “region” or “district”, as in *sawād* Baghdad, often used by Yāqūt and others. Cf. Le Strange, *Lands*, 24, n. 1. This is different from *Sawād* used without any specification which refers to Southern Iraq.

65) Ibn al-Athīr, *Lubāb*, I, 449; al-Suyūṭī, *Lubb*, 112.



i.e. "the cultivated part of Mesopotamia" <sup>66</sup>). Yāqūt (d. 1229), who had better sources, described the lower Rādhān (*al-asfal*) and the upper one (*al-a'lā*), as two districts in the Sawād of Baghdad, which include many villages <sup>67</sup>).

If we now turn to Syriac sources, and to Christian Arabic ones, we will find that Rādhān is the name of a whole region. The Nestorian Mārī b. Sulaymān mentions a bishop of Rādhān, listed together with the bishops (*miṭrāns*) of Jundisābūr and Karkh <sup>68</sup>). Elsewhere he cites the tradition about Mar Mārī al-Salīḥ ("the apostle"), one of the 70 messengers (*mursalūn*), who was a Jew by birth (end of the first century) and converted to Christianity many people in Babylon, Ahwāz and other districts of the Tigris, Fārs and Kashkar, and the people of the two Rādhāns (*al-rādhānayn*). A certain Helqānā built 300 churches and cloisters in the Rādhāns <sup>69</sup>). A parallel Syriac tradition narrates the arrival of Adday and Mārī, the holy apostles, to "our district"; when they arrived to Karkh, they met a man named Joseph, who was baptized, and it is he who built the church known as *dīrā de-bēth yōsēf* <sup>70</sup>). Jews in the region of the Rādhāns are mentioned as destroyers of the well built by one of the apostles, Sāvā <sup>71</sup>). The Persian governor (*marzubān*) of the land of the *Nabaṭ* (i.e. *Bēt Aramayē*) had his seat in the region of Rādhān <sup>72</sup>). The Syriac spelling of the name is Radhan, and sometimes Radhān <sup>73</sup>).

In Muslim tradition too the name Rādhān (mostly in the plural, Rādhānāt, or dual, Rādhānān) was used as the name of a region, during the first three centuries of Islam. Balādhurī mentions that Sa'd b. al-Waqqāṣ dispatched the army eastwards to conquer Daqūqā and Khānī-

66) Steinschneider, *Jeschurun*, 6 (1868), 28 f., n. 1.

67) Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 729.

68) Mārī b. Sulaymān, *Majdal*, 99.

69) *Ibid.*, 3.

70) Hoffmann, *Auszüge*, 45. On the legendary, unhistorical character of these traditions and individuals see Labourt, *Christianisme*, 9 ff.

71) Hoffmann, *ibid.*, 78.

72) *Chr. de Séert*, 62.

73) See Nöldeke, *ZDMG*, 33 (1879), 325, n. 1. Cf. the letter of Timotheos (the Nestorian Catholicos, ca. 800), ed. Braun, *Or. Christ.*, 1 (1910), 310, ll. 1, 2, where both *Radhan* and *Radhān* are used.

jār (= Khāniqīn), through the Rādhānāt<sup>74</sup>). A look at the map would show us that the way to Daqūqā and Khāniqīn is through the region Madā'in-Nahrwān-Daskara-'Ukbarā<sup>75</sup>).

Ṭabarī, while speaking about the events of the year 66 (= 685), mentions Rādhānāt as the region crossed on the way to that of Mawṣil<sup>76</sup>).

Al-Rādhān also appears as an administrative unit. The man in charge of it was reported to have embezzled funds in 251 (= 865)<sup>77</sup>). 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Abī'l-Shawārib was appointed cadī, in 284 (= 897), over Baghdad, some other localities, and al-Rādhānayn<sup>78</sup>). Mu'nīs appointed Abū Hījā governor, inter alia, of Buzurj Sābūr (= 'Ukbarā), the Rādhānayn, Daqūqā and Khānījār, in 317 (= 929)<sup>79</sup>). Ibn al-Athīr counts al-Rādhānāt among the provinces (*a'māl*) of the Khurāsān road, in that same year. He mentions the appointment of a governor over it in 330 (= 941)<sup>80</sup>). Al-Akḥṭal rejoices over the sufferings of the clans of Qays "between Rādhān and al-Ḥaḍr"<sup>81</sup>). The latter is Roman Hatra, on the river Tharthar, near Mawṣil<sup>82</sup>). A poem by the same poet praises the fertility and wealth of Rādhān<sup>83</sup>), where he himself stayed when he wrote it<sup>84</sup>). The great fertility of the region is noted also by Ibn Khurdādhbe<sup>85</sup>). Ibn al-Athīr relates that during a period of distress in 495

74) Balādhuri, *Futūḥ*, 265.

75) See the map in Le Strange, *Lands*, facing p. 25.

76) Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, VI, 40 (= II, 644 f.).

77) *Ibid.*, IX, 289 (= III, 1554).

78) *Ibid.*, X, 51 f. (= III, 2161).

79) Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārūb*, *Eclipse*, I, 193.

80) Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VIII, 149, 287.

81) Al-Akḥṭal, 135, ll. 6 ff.

82) Cf. Le Strange, *Lands*, 98.

83) 310, ll. 2 ff.

84) Balādhuri, *Ansāb*, V, 315.

85) Ibn Khurdādhbe, *BGA*, VI, 12. He mentions that the district (*tassūj*) of al-Rādhān included 19 townships (*rasātiq*), with 302 threshing floors (*bayādīra*), producing 4800 *kurrs* (1 *kurr* = ca. 3000 kg. of wheat, cf. Hinz, *Masse*, 43), and paying 120,000 *warāq* dirhems as yearly tax. The date palms of Rādhān are famous and highly praised, cf. Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, VI, 253 (= II, 935; *nakhīl rādhān*); al-Farazdaq, 180, l. 8 (*al-tamara min rādhān*). Rādhān evidently became a symbol of the fertile lands of the conquered countries. Believers were warned not to covet domains out of a desire for worldly goods, in words attributed to the Prophet: "What is in Medina is

(= 1102) wheat was bought from Rādhān, for 20 dinars a *kurr*<sup>86</sup>). Ibn Khurdādhbe lists the Rādhān district together with Buzurj-Sābūr, Nahr Būq, Kilwādhā, Nahr Bīn, Daskara, the three districts of Nahrwān (upper, middle, lower)<sup>87</sup>).

Thus we see that in the ninth century Rādhān came to be the designation of a single district, whereas we previously found the term Rādhānāt (plural; probably three—upper, middle, and lower) and Rādhānān (dual), and in Syriac and Arabic Christian sources it had a still broader meaning. Like other geographical names, its use varied very much during the different periods. It is important therefore to check which other names are connected with it.

Rādhān is very much connected with the name *Jūkhā*. In a Syriac source the two are identical. Rādhān-Gōkhay is described as part of the *hyparchy* of Bēt Aramayē, the other part being Ṭirhān<sup>88</sup>), and had its own bishop<sup>89</sup>).

Ṭabarī describes the upper Rādhān as being in the land (*ard*) of Jūkhā<sup>90</sup>). The army moved northwards from Sūrā, passed through *ard* Jūkhā, reached al-Rādhānāt, and turned towards the land of Mawṣil (66 = 685)<sup>91</sup>). *Ard* Jūkhā is “(like) one single trench”, is how Ṭabarī describes it, to show how irrigated it was<sup>92</sup>).

Yāqūt described Jūkhā as a stream, around which there is a large

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in Medina and what is in Rādhān is in Rādhān”; see Yahyā b. Ādam’s *K. al-kharāj*, 76 (no. 254).

86) Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, X, 230. On the fertility of the region, cf. also Le Strange, *Lands*, 139 f., following al-Mustawfī.

87) Ibn Khurdādhbe, *BGA*, VI, 12. Cf. Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, IV, 836, who says that Nahr Bīn (Bil) is a district in the Sawād of Baghdad, adjacent to Nahr Būq. Le Strange, *JRAS*, 1895, 281 understood it vice versa, namely that the former was a stream irrigating the latter, which was a district. In fact one can see in Ibn Khurdādhbe that the two applied to both streams and districts. The same name designating both streams and towns, or districts, is very common in the toponymy of this region.

88) Hoffmann, *Auszüge*, 259. See also Sarre-Herzfeld, *Reise*, I, 61 f., n. 4: Jūkhā was one of the districts subject to the Catholicos of Bēt Aramayē.

89) Hoffmann, *ibid.*, 253.

90) Ṭabarī, *Taʾrikh*, VI, 251 (= II, 933). Cf. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, IV, 334.

91) Ṭabarī, *ibid.*, VI, 40 (= II, 644); cf. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, IV, 189. in the latter the point of departure is Madāʾin.

92) Ṭabarī, *Taʾrikh*, VI, 252 (= II, 933).



district (*kūra*) in the Sawād of Baghdād, between Khāniqīn and Khūzistān. He quotes verses praising its agricultural wealth. It was located to the west of al-Rādhānāt <sup>93</sup>); but according to Ṭabarī, it was south of al-Rādhānāt <sup>94</sup>); elsewhere he describes Jūkhā as the whole region between the Tigris and the Nahrwān canal <sup>95</sup>). Al-Ḥajjāj appoints Abū Ḥarb b. Abī'l-Aswad governor of Jūkhā <sup>96</sup>). That Jūkhā is the region along both sides of the Khurāsān road is implied by Ṭabarī, who tells of the appointment of a governor "over the Khurāsān road and the center (*baṭn*) of Jūkhā <sup>97</sup>).

The region of Jūkhā is mentioned in a Gaonic responsum; "it is (the name of) a place behind Babylon (= Baghdad) east of the Tigris behind Nahrwānē (apparently plural of Nahrwān, like Arabic Nahrwānāt). It is called Gūnāy and the Ismaelites (= the Arabs) still call it Jūkhā" <sup>98</sup>). Mention of what was called Gūnāy-Jūkhā is extant in the Babylonian Talmud too, where it is said to be a stream which empties into the Tigris <sup>99</sup>).

Returning to the region of the Rādhāns, we find that its northern boundary was the Batt canal. Ibn al-Athīr describes Batt as a village in the district of Mawṣil. The only stream between it and the Sawād (by

93) Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 143. See the verses also in al-Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, I, 403. The latter says that Jūkhā is a city (*balad*) in Iraq, watered by the river Jūkhā.

94) Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, VI, 40 (= II, 644).

95) *Ibid.*, V, 76 (= I, 3367), referring to the year 37 (= 657). The earlier the tradition, the more the names seem to refer to the same places the Syriac-Christian indicates.

96) Ibn Qutayba, *Ma'arif*, 435.

97) Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, IX, 405 (= III, 1736). That in the ninth century the name Rādhān applied mainly to the region around the Khurāsān road can be seen from the list of places where taxes were to be collected by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṭā'yī (probably 892), where the Rādhānayn and the Khurāsān road are found together. See al-Ṣābī, *Wuṣṣarā'*, 15.

98) Harkavy, *Resp.*, no. 399, p. 213. Cf. parallel identical versions in *Otzar Hageonim* to *Berākhot*, 44 (referring to *B.T.*, *Berākhot*, 17b) and to *Qiddūshin*, 175 f. (to *B.T.*, *Qiddūshin*, 70b). See Harkavy's note, *Resp.*, 379, following Yāqūt, cf. above n. 90.

99) Gyūnay, München Codex of *B.T.*, *Qiddūshin*, 71b; the printed editions have Yū'anī. The region apparently used to be compared to Palestine, see what Rāv says in *Berēshīt Rabbā* ch. 16 (Theod.-Alb. 145, ll. 2-3, cf. the notes *ad locum*). See also Berliner, *Beiträge*, 19; Obermeyer, *Landschaft*, 126 f.

which he certainly meant the Sawād of Baghdad) was the Ḥawlāyā, in the upper Rādhān in the land of Jūkhā<sup>100</sup>). The parallel fragment in Ṭabarī says that Ḥawlāyā is a stream between the *takebūm* of Mawṣil and the Sawād (of Baghdad) and mentions the proximity of Ḥawlāyā to Batt. The connection between Ḥawlāyā and Rādhān is obvious from that fragment from Ṭabarī<sup>101</sup>). An incursion of the Khawarizmians is said to have occurred in 1225, into Batt and al-Rādhānāt<sup>102</sup>). The Batt canal then was the northernmost one, whereas more to the south there was the canal, or rather a system of canals, called Rādhān, or Rādhānāt<sup>103</sup>). The Batt canal was known also as Tāmarrā and was in fact a ramification of the main canal, called Ḥawlāyā, or Diyālā, or Khālīṣ. This main canal connected the Nahrwān canal (which formed the eastern border of the region, and ran in the main parallel to the Tigris) with the Tigris<sup>104</sup>).

The Nestorian sources also mention Ḥawlāyā, but as a city, Ḥālē, said to be the capital of the Rādhān province<sup>105</sup>); this province occupied the region between the Tigris and Nahrwān, known also as Jūkhā, and

100) Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, IV, 334.

101) Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, VI, 251 f. (= II, 933).

102) Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, XII, 277.

103) In Arabic sources Batt is sometimes written Baṭṭ, cf. Ibn al-Ṣābūnī, *Takmila*, 56, and n. 4 of the editor (Jawād). Cf. al-Dhahabī, *Mushtabih*, I, 70, describing it as a village on the road to Daqūqā (i.e. in the northeastern corner of the region).

104) Cf. Suhrāb, 128, who describes the Khālīṣ as a big stream, on which ships sailed. It flowed into the Tigris south of Baghdad. See also Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, I, 812, s.v. Tāmarrā, which is described by him as a district having a stream of the same name. He also cites the legend (repeated by other writers too) of Tāmarrā and Nahrwān, who were the sons of Jūkhā. Le Strange describes them as parts of one and the same canal. *Al-qāṣṣ al-kisrāwī*, i.e. "Khosroe's canal", formed its beginning, whereas the canal as a whole was known as Nahrwān; its northern part was known as the Tāmarrā canal, of which the Khālīṣ was a branch. Cf. his *Lands*, 57-60. See Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, VIII, 547 (= III, 1002). Cf. the description of the region in Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, BGA, VII, 53, who enumerates the tributaries of the Tigris: Diyālā, Nahr Bīn, Nahrwān; the last is called Tāmarrā at its beginning; he also mentions some of that region's towns, such as Ba'qūbā, the city of Nahrwān, 'Abartā, Uskāf.

105) Cf. Labourt, *Christianisme*, 163. See also Nöldeke, *ZDMG*, 33 (1879), 375, n. 1. See also his assumption about the Assyrian origin of the name: *ra-da-a-nu*. The most prominent of the teachers of Nisibis, Mar Abbā (middle of the 6th century) was a native of Ḥālē in Rādhān, cf. Vööbus, *Nisibis*, 161.



later as the Sawād of Baghdad<sup>106</sup>). The tenth century geographers considered the region of Rādhān a part of Fārs. Its administrative center was later at Samarrā<sup>107</sup>).

There were a number of cities and towns in the Rādhān region. First of all, there was Muslim Madā'in, previously known as Māhōzē (= "the cities"), consisting of Ctesiphon and Seleukeia. It was an impor-

106) Hoffmann, *Auszüge*, 71, n. 634, also considers that the Rādhān province began from the Hamrin chain to the north and stretched along the eastern shore of the Tigris. The older name of the region can also be detected in the name Bihrādhān, probably from Syriac Bē(t) Rādhān; also Māh Bihrādhān (Māh probably meant region, in Persian, cf. Schwartz, *Iran*, 445, n. 5). Both Rādhān and Bihrādhān are sometimes miswritten, in Ṭabarī and elsewhere, as Zādhān or Bihzādhān. Schwartz, *Iran*, 667, (also elsewhere, see the Index *ibid.*), was certainly wrong when he designated a place called Māh Bihzādhān, which simply did not exist. Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, III, 406, writes that Bihzādhān is identical with the "Rādhāns", east of the Tigris, in the Sawād of Baghdad. Schwartz, like others, did not realize the difference between Sawād as "Southern Iraq" and Sawād as "district" and thought therefore that Yāqūt was wrong. See the tradition cited in Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, IV, 136 f. (= 2633), about Māh Bihrādhān and Māh Dīnār (called together al-Māhān, the two Māhs), that were granted letters of protection, whose text is given there, recognizing their religious rights and obliging them to pay the *jizya*. See Bihzādhān in Ṭabarī, *ibid.*, V, 178 f. (= II, 24 ff.), where it is clear from the context that Rādhān is meant (Ziyād marches against Mu'āwiya via Bihzādhān[!] to the Ḥulwān road and to Madā'in). Baradān, later the name of a town north of Baghdad, was probably just another form of Bihrādhān. It is described as if it were a kind of *binterland* of Baghdad with a more favorable climate; cf. Ṭabarī, *ibid.*, VI, 257 (= II, 941; Shabīb sought refuge from the heat in Māh Bihzādhān[!], for three months); VIII, 29 (= III, 354; al-Manṣūr stayed in Baradān, 767); VIII, 144 (= III, 494; al-Mahdī stayed in Baradān during the summer). Naḥūm al-Ḥazzān al-Baradānī certainly was from that region. He is mentioned towards the end of the 10th century. Cf. TS Loan 90, f. 2r, ll. 20-21 and 105, f. 1v, l. 19, ed. Ginzberg, *Geonica*, II, 58, 69. In TS 10 J 4, f. 3, ed. Mann, *JQR NS*, 9 (1918-19), 152 he is said to have traded with the Maghrib, among other things in *kuhl* (antimony powder) and books. Cf. also Obermeyer, *Landschaft*, 269 f. See the description of the region also in Sarre-Herzfeld, *Reise*, I, 57; see n. 3 *ibid.*, about the ancient names of the Tāmarrā. See also the map, II, facing p. 80, where it becomes obvious that the canals of the Nahrwān and the Diyālā basin covered the region from Madā'in (south of Baghdad) to Samarrā, along the eastern shore of the Tigris.

107) Muqaddasī, *BGA* III, 357; al-Iṣṭakhri, *BGA* I, 102. The region was for generations the scene of internal wars of the caliphate, and very often the actions and movements of the forces of the rebels, Khārijīs and others, are noted as having taken place there. See e.g. Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, VI, 225 (= II, 894); VIII, 57 (= III, 384 f.); VIII, 323 (= III, 711); VIII, 558 (= III, 1016 f.; = Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, 241); IX, 374 f. (= III, 1689 f.).



tant Jewish center under the Persians, as Talmudic sources show <sup>108</sup>).

Daskarat al-Malik, situated on the Diyālā, was Persian Dastagird, and an important and flourishing city under the early 'Abbāsids. It was the first important station on the Khurāsān road after Nahrwān <sup>109</sup>).

Some eight *farsakhs* (ca. 50 km.) to the south was 'Ukbarā (Buzurj Sābūr), situated on what was then the eastern shore of the Tigris (which later moved a considerable distance eastward), and was a main junction on the river <sup>110</sup>). The Jewish sectarian leader Ismā'il al-'Ukbarī was from there <sup>111</sup>).

Nahrwān, mentioned in the account of Nathan ha-Bavli <sup>112</sup>) was one of the main cities in that region. Ba'qūbā (also Bā'qūbā, Bāqūbā) was situated on the Nahrwān canal, ten *farsakhs* (ca. 60 km.) from Baghdad <sup>113</sup>). Kilwādhā was both a town and a district in the region between Madā'in and Jūkhā, as Ṭabarī has it. The eastern gate of Baghdad was called *bāb kilwādhā*; today Kilwādhā is incorporated into the southern part of Baghdad, Qarāra <sup>114</sup>). The eastern part of the city of Baghdad was in fact in the very heart of what had once been called Rādhān. The strong connections between the Jews of this province and the new

<sup>108</sup>) The connection between Rādhān and Madā'in is discernible in the terms of appointment of Ḥudhayfa b. Ḥisl (= b. Ḥusayl, = b. al-Yamān) as governor of the land behind the Tigris, namely Jūkhā, in Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, 37 f., 48; of Madā'in, in Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd al-ghāba*, I, 392, and Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tabdīb*, II, 220; of the Sawād, Balādhuri, *Ansāb*, I, 163; of the land behind the Tigris, *idem*, *Futūḥ*, 269 and Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, IV, 139 (= I, 2637). This appointment was made after the conquest, in ca. 640. Some 45 years later Ishāq b. Mas'ūd was appointed governor of Madā'in and "the land of Jūkhā", cf. Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, VI, 34 (= II, 635; A.H. 66 = 685).

<sup>109</sup>) Cf. Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, 295, n. 1; Le Strange, *Lands*, 62; Canard, *Transl. of al-Ṣūlī*, 151, n. 1; Sarre-Herzfeld, *Reise*, I, 59, n. 2; II, 76 ff.

<sup>110</sup>) Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, VII, 412 (= III, 12); IX, 375 (= III, 1690); Le Strange, *JRAS*, 1895, 38 f. Hoffmann, *Auszüge*, 77, n. 704.

<sup>111</sup>) Al-Qirqisānī, *Anwār*, 1-2, no. 15, p. 13.

<sup>112</sup>) Neubauer, *Med. J. Chr.*, II, 85; *Nahrwān we-keḥōl parwārāh*, which were included in the realm of the exilarch. See also TS 13 J 23, f. 9, ed. Mann, *Jews*, II, 115, a letter to Abraham b. Haggay, signed by Ya'ish b. Sahl al-Nahrwānī al-Ḥazzān.

<sup>113</sup>) Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, I, 472. There the "great qāṭūl" took the name of Tāmarrā, cf. Le Strange, *Lands*, 59.

<sup>114</sup>) Ibn Khurdādhbe, *BGA* VI, 12; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, VI, 230 (= II, 901); Ibn al-Ṭīqtaqā, *al-Fakhri*, 454; Sarre-Herzfeld, *Reise*, II, 105; Le Strange, *Lands*, 31.

city are therefore quite comprehensible. It is probably from here that the first Jews came to settle in Baghdad.

Although the name Rādhān is not found in Jewish sources<sup>115</sup>), there is no doubt that from ancient times on a dense Jewish population lived in what was called Rādhān, Jūkhā, or Sawād Baghdad.

Rādhānites took over the leadership of the *yeshivā* of Pūmbeditā for a period of ten years at the end of the eighth century, 788-798. In the year 1099 Sel. (787-8), Mar Rāv Menashē b. Mar Rāv Joseph was appointed Gaon of that *yeshivā*. He was from Jūkhā (*we-gūkhā'ā hawā*), from Ba'qūbā (Bē 'Uqbā). He was Gaon until 1107 Sel. (795-6), when he was succeeded by Mar Rāv Isaiah ha-Levi b. Mar Rāv Abbā, who was "from Kilwādhā, a city that is near Baghdad", and remained in office until 798<sup>116</sup>).

115) Steinschneider, *Jeschurun*, 6 (1868), 30 f., tried to find Rādhānites in a fragment of Dūnash b. Tamīm's commentary to the *Sēfer Yeširā*, edited by Munck, *JA*, VI-16 (1850), 21, n. 1. There the use of Arabic for a better understanding of Hebrew is praised, "since Hebrew is like a purified Arabic", and further: "this principle was received by us from *benē ha-dānī*, who came to us from Palestine." Steinschneider thought that perhaps a *r* was changed into *b* and one should read it *benē radānī*; but the Parma MS. of that commentary, as quoted by Mann, *Texts*, I, 74, n. 25 has "until Abū Dānī and David he-Hārāsh, who were from the city of Fās, came to us (to Qayrawān), from Palestine".

116) Sherīrā, *Iggeret*, ed. Lewin, 105, 190. The economic importance of the Babylonian-Persian Jews is known. See the sources regarding their economic position and activities on the threshold of the Islamic period, summed up by Baron, in the section "entry into world trade", in *SRHJ*, IV, 171-178; cf. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs*, 117 f.

Babylonian-Persian Jews formed at that period, and through the first three centuries of Islam, the largest Jewish concentration in the entire Diaspora, as well as the main Jewish spiritual center. What Ibn Khurdādhbe's account adds to this picture is that a certain part of the merchants' class of this Jewry held a central position in the international trade of those times. Thus one sees that the strong spiritual connections between the Babylonian center and the rest of the Diaspora were paralleled by manifold economic activities and ties in which the Jewish centers on the routes of the Rādhānites were apparently involved. For a general outlook on the connection between the Jewish centers of communal leadership and learning in Babylonia and the growth of international trade and Jewish participation in it, see Goitein, *Proceed. 5th World Congr. of J. St.*, II (1969), 101 ff.

It seems that the majority of Babylonian-Persian Jews were divided into three main subdivisions. The northwestern division was centered around Fīrūz-Sābūr (Anbār) — Neharde'ā — Pūmbeditā; the southern, around Sūrā; the eastern, mainly around



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To conclude, it may be said that there is no reason whatsoever to change anything in the text of Ibn Khurdādhbe which describes the routes of the Jewish merchants from Rādhān and the goods carried by them. They were no association, nor organization, nor group, they only had in common their country of origin. The very fact that Ibn Khurdādhbe refers to otherwise generally known routes, open to anybody, as "routes of the Jewish merchants", is evidence of their unrivaled position in the international trade of that period. The fragment of Ibn Khurdādhbe is an outstanding piece of information on the social and economic life of Oriental Jews in the early medieval period, of which our knowledge is so poor.\*

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Māhōzē (Ctesiphon-Seleukeia, Madā'in), included the dense Jewish population of the eastern bank of the Tigris. This division corresponds to what Nathan ha-Bavli tells us in his famous account, about the three *rāshūyōt* ("authorities") namely, of Pūmbeditā, of Sūrā, and of the exilarch (see Neubauer, *Med. J. Chr.*, II, 85 ff.). Were the Jews of the third subdivision (which belonged to the *rāshūt* of the exilarch, cf. n. 109 above) perhaps designated as "Rādhānite Jews", at least by their non-Jewish neighbors? We saw that Rādhān was the synonym of Jūkhā. *Rādhānī* would then be the correspondent of the Jewish Aramaic *Gūkhā'ā* of Sherirā Gaon's letter.

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