



# Radaniya

[ Radaniya, Radhaniya, or Radhanites. (Accessed Nov. 16, 2022). Overview. Jewish Virtual Library. Reproduced for educational purposes only. Fair Use relied upon. Source: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/radaniya> ]

**RADANIYA (Radhanites)**, Jewish merchants of the ninth century C.E., who, according to the contemporary report of the Arab geographer Ibn Khurradādhbih, spoke Arabic, Persian, Greek, Frankish, Spanish, and Slavonic, and traveled from the farthest west to the farthest east and back again. Their starting point is stated to have been in Spain or France. They crossed the Mediterranean to Egypt, and transferred their merchandise on camelback across the isthmus of Suez to the Red Sea, whence by ship they eventually reached India and China. They returned by the same route with musk, aloeswood, camphor, cinnamon, and other products of the Oriental countries. From the west they brought eunuchs, slave girls and boys, brocade, beaver and marten skins, and swords. Some of them sailed to Constantinople to sell their goods. Others visited the residence of the Frankish king for the same purpose. Sometimes, instead of using the Red Sea route to the East, they disembarked at Anṭākiya (Antioch) and crossed Syria to the Euphrates, whence they passed to Baghdad. Then they descended the Tigris to the Persian gulf, and so reached India and China. These journeys could also be made by land. Thus the Jewish merchants might proceed to the east via Tangier, Kairouan, and the other North African towns, reaching Cairo, Damascus, Kufa, Basra, Ahwaz, Persia, and India, and finally, as before, attaining by this land route their destination in China.

Another of their routes lay across Europe, "behind Rome," through the country of the Ṣaqāliba (Slavonians) to Khamlīj, the capital of the \*Khazars, another name for \*Atil. Thence they passed to the sea of Jurjan (i.e., down the Volga to the Caspian), then to Balkh and Transoxiana, and so to the Far East. Since Ibn Khurradādhbih relates that the Russian merchants, when passing through the Khazar capital, were tithed by the Khazar ruler, the Radaniya in similar circumstances were no doubt also liable.

The name occurs in two forms: Rādhāniya (as recorded by Ibn Khurradādhbih) and Rāhdāniya (by Ibn al-Faqīh). Since the research of J.-T. Reinaud it has been customary to explain the latter form as Persian, from *rāhdān*, "knowing the way," but it is not certainly the more original. Other suggestions have been that the name is connected with Latin Rhodanus, i.e., the river Rhone, and that in the Letter of Ḥasdai (see \*Khazars) the people called *sheluḥei Ḥorasan ha-soḥarim*, apparently "merchant-envoys of Khurasan" (not very probably), are the Radaniya.

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[Douglas Morton Dunlop]

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