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## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Communications and the Palestinian Origins of Ashkenaz

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THE CONTENTION of this essay is that the recent scholarship on communication in early medieval Europe has undermined the major tacit assumption of the reigning theory of the cultural origins of the Ashkenazic community.

Nineteenth-century Jewish scholars who pioneered the academic study of Judaism (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*) discovered that the Ashkenazic rite had strong Palestinian influences, and the past half-century has witnessed a vigorous reassertion of this viewpoint. It has been claimed that the underlying religious culture of Early Ashkenaz was Palestinian, and that only later, some say as late as the mid-eleventh century, did the Babylonian Talmud achieve the dominance in the religious life of Ashkenaz with which we commonly associate it. Whether one dates the Babylonian supersession in this culture to the mid-eleventh century or advances it to the mid-tenth century, the Palestinian origin of Ashkenazic culture is agreed upon by all; indeed, it may currently be called a scholarly commonplace.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Grossman, 'Zikatah shel Yahadut Ashkenaz ha-Kedumah el Erets Yisra'el', *Shalem*, 3 (1981), 57–92; I. M. Ta-Shma, *Minhag Ashkenaz ha-Kadmon* (Jerusalem, 1992), 98–103 and *passim*; R. Bonfil, 'Bein Erets Yisra'el le-Bavel: Kavim le-Hefer Toledot ha-Tarbut shel ha-Yehudim be-'Italyah ha-Deromit u-ve-'Eiropah ha-Notsrit bi-Yemei ha-Beinayim ha-Mukdamim', *Shalem*, 5 (1987), 1–30, esp. pp. 13–19; id., 'Eduto shel Agobard mi-Lyons 'al 'Olamam ha-Ruhani shel Yehudei 'Iro ba-Me'ah ha-Teshi'it', in Y. Dan et al., eds., *Mehkarim be-Kabbalah, be-Filosofyah u-ve-Sifrut ha-Musar, Muggashim le-Yesha'yahu Tishby bi-Melo't Lo Shiv'im ve-Hamesh Shanim* (Jerusalem, 1986), 327–48, esp. pp. 339–47 (an abridged, English, version of this article is available in Y. Dan, ed., *Binah: Studies in Jewish History, Culture, and Thought*, iii: *Jewish Intellectual History in the Middle Ages* [Westport, Conn., 1994], 1–17); I. Marcus, 'The Dynamics of Jewish Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century', in M. Signer and J. Van Engen, eds., *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Notre Dame, Ind., 2001), 36–9. See also Y. Sussmann, 'Kitvei-Yad u-Mesorot Nusah shel ha-Mishnah', *Divrei ha-Kongres ha-'Olami ha-Shevi'i le-Madda'i ha-Yahadut (August 7–14, 1977): Mehkarim be-Talmud, Halakhah u-Midrash* (Jerusalem, 1981), 236 n. 89.

I have long had my doubts about this truism on both methodological and empirical grounds which I will present in the next chapter. Here I would like to challenge its underlying premise, namely, that the nascent Ashkenazic community was located in some transalpine corner of Europe with only a tenuous connection to the East and dependent on a single cultural source whose pipeline ran from Byzantine Palestine to Byzantine southern Italy and from there through the Alpine passes to the Rhineland. The liturgical poetry of Ashkenaz was, indeed, nurtured by just such an umbilical cord, and so, it is claimed, it stands to reason that its culture generally, and its religious rites in particular, were similarly nourished.



It seems best to begin with the results of recent studies in the Ashkenazic manuscript traditions of the Babylonian Talmud. This may seem somewhat esoteric, but its relevance will soon be apparent. The work of the last forty years has been well summarized by Vered Noam:

[E. S.] Rosenthal has noted that there are two manuscript traditions [of the Talmud]: an eastern one, [best] reflected in the writings of R. Ḥanan'el [of Kairouan], and another widespread version, which he called the 'vulgata', which is reflected not only in the writings of Rashi and the Franco-German Tosafists but also in Spanish manuscripts and even in very old eastern manuscripts and Genizah fragments. This would indicate that the split in the traditions had already occurred in the East, and that the Ashkenazic tradition is an eastern one. Friedman has found that the Ashkenazic manuscripts of tractate *Bava Metsi'a* reflect the same text as that found in the writings of the Babylonian Geonim. Siegel's researches have revealed remarkable similarities between the Ashkenazic version of tractate *Megillah* and fragments from the Genizah. A striking likeness has been found to exist between the superb Sephardic manuscript of tractate *Megillah* (located in Göttingen) and the Franco-German textual traditions. Sabato has discovered two clear textual traditions in tractate *Sanhedrin*: an eastern one reflected in the Yemenite manuscripts and in the works of Rabbi Yitshak of Fez (Alfasi); the other reflected in the Ashkenazic tradition, which is mirrored, surprisingly, in the version used by Rabbenu Ḥanan'el [of Kairouan]: that of R. Me'ir Abul'afia [Ramah] of Toledo. He further surmised that the split had taken place quite early and in the East, and that this eastern version somehow got to Ashkenaz. This tradition has readings as good as [the Yemenite one] and at times even superior [to it]. The general picture that emerges from all these 'partial' studies [of individual tractates] is confirmed by a broad examination of the orthography of [the majority of] extant talmudic manuscripts. Friedman's morphological study has shown

that many of the so-called 'Palestinian' spellings are, in fact, Babylonian, and that to a large extent this orthography is found in late Ashkenazic manuscripts. These manuscripts preserve many of the distinctive Babylonian spellings, as do the [highly regarded] Yemenite manuscripts.<sup>2</sup>

The upshot of all this is that either the Babylonian material that reached Yemen, the Maghreb (Kairouan), and Spain equally arrived in Ashkenaz, or Ashkenaz received its traditions from these locales. A third possibility is that it acquired some of its manuscripts independently from the East, others via the mediation of Yemen, Kairouan, and Spain. One might argue that Ashkenazic manuscripts are late—the earliest is from 1177 and most others are far later.<sup>3</sup> What relevance can these sources have for pre-Crusade Ashkenaz? Let us look at Rashi's emendations, made in the eleventh century, which may throw some light on this question. In the same article Noam has shown that in tractate *Sukkah* 71 percent of Rashi's emendations are confirmed by eastern or Spanish manuscript traditions. This is an extraordinarily high figure. Shai Secunda's research shows that in tractate *'Avodah Zarah* there is a 43 percent congruence of Rashi's emendations with manuscripts that, to use Friedman's typology, are either Mediterranean or of specifically Spanish provenance.<sup>4</sup> (Unfortunately we have no Yemenite manuscripts on *'Avodah Zarah*.) One might argue that a congruence of 43 percent could equally be random; chance would have it that at least close to 50 percent of all good emendations would be corroborated by some manuscript or other. Reply can be made that, first, there are only three and not a dozen manuscripts of this tractate. Second, Friedman has shown that one of the two manuscripts named Jewish Theological Seminary 15 is a composite. The first half (up to fo. 43) is of the 'Mediterranean' type (in Friedman's orthographical typology), while the second half (fos. 43–76) is Spanish.<sup>5</sup> In the first half of this manuscript the congruence of its

<sup>2</sup> V. Noam, 'Mesorot Nusah Kedumot be-Haggahot Rashi ba-Talmud', *Sidra*, 17 (2001–2), 110–11. The work done in the last decade or so has only confirmed the picture she drew in 2001.

<sup>3</sup> *Talmud Bavli: Ketav-Yad Firentseh*, introd. D. Rosenthal (Jerusalem, 1972), introduction, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Shai Secunda's paper, written for a seminar of mine, contains both an analysis of the variants and emendation together with a transcription of all the manuscript readings (including those of the Genizah fragments) of the talmudic passages emended by Rashi, both as found in the printed version of his commentary and in MS Parma, De Rossi 1292. Deciding which version an author had in front of him often hinges on fine nuances. One may disagree with one point or another of Secunda's analysis, but the overall picture that he draws is, to my thinking at least, beyond question. As both the paper and the transcription variants have been placed online at <<http://www.azyn.blogspot.com>>, readers may draw their own conclusions.

<sup>5</sup> S. Friedman, 'Massekhet *'Avodah Zarah*, Ketav Yad New York, Ketav Yad she-Hu'atak bi-Shenei Shelavim', *Leshonenu*, 56 (1992), 371–4.

readings with Rashi's emendations is 47 percent; in the latter half—only 33 percent. The degree of congruence with Rashi's emendations changes noticeably with the change of the textual tradition to which it is being compared. Apparently, Rashi was working from a manuscript that had more in common with the Mediterranean type than with the Sephardic one, and that differed considerably from the one that came to be called 'Ashkenazic'. Nor is tractate *'Avodah Zarah* unique in this respect: 31 percent of Rashi's emendations in tractate *Sanhedrin* correspond to the Yemenite tradition; 13 percent are found only in the Yemenite textual tradition.<sup>6</sup>

Truth to tell, we need not restrict our enquiry to Rashi's emendations. Friedman has shown that in the eighth chapter of tractate *Bava Metsi'a*, Rashi's incipits reflect a 'Mediterranean' text, rather than what came to be known as the 'Ashkenazic' version of the tractate.<sup>7</sup> Rashi didn't import these manuscripts. They were apparently in circulation at the time and he took care to obtain them. No doubt he was a brilliant commentator and, quite possibly, he was equally talented in emendation; nevertheless, a 71 percent congruence in *Sukkah* is too high to be intuition alone, and the marked change in degree of correspondence with alternative textual traditions to which the emendations are being compared, as happens in *'Avodah Zarah*, is, again, too salient to be happenstance. It seems clear that, alongside intuition, Rashi, writing in the eleventh century, also employed a broad spectrum of manuscripts of different provenances and traditions, all of which came from places far removed from the city of Troyes, where he lived, and from the Rhineland academies of Mainz and Worms, where he had studied.

Can we push yet further back in time? I believe that we plausibly can. R. Gershom of Mainz, more commonly known as Rabbenu Gershom Me'or ha-Golah (d. 1028) issued a ban on anyone who emended the text of the Talmud.<sup>8</sup> Let us remember that he wrote at the dawn of Ashkenazic culture, in a period before any commentary on the Talmud had been composed. The

<sup>6</sup> M. Sabato, *Ketav-Yad Teimani le-Massekhet Sanhedrin (Bavli) u-Mekomo be-Masoret ha-Nusah*, Sidrat 'Avodot Doktor Nivharot (Jerusalem, 1998), 231–78, esp. the table on p. 258.

<sup>7</sup> S. Friedman, *Talmud 'Arukh, Perek ha-Sokher et ha-Umanim—ha-Nusah 'im Marvo Kelali* (Jerusalem, 1997), 48, 57–69.

<sup>8</sup> Rabbenu Tam, *Sefer ha-Yashar: Helek Hiddushim*, ed. S. Schlesinger (Jerusalem, 1959), introduction, 9. This paragraph may need modification in light of my suggestion as to the cultural origins of Ashkenaz, below, pp. 163–9. However, one would do well to note here, as in the chapter on *minhag* Ashkenaz ha-Kadmon (Ch. 3 above—see n. 4), that my remarks in 'Cultural Origins' address the new immigrants, the tiny elite who established the yeshivah in Mainz and who undertook to write the Mainz commentary on the Talmud. Here we are treating the local population of Mainz and of the Rhineland and the neighboring Lorraine (and even, perhaps, that of Champagne). There is no reason to suppose that these people had any meaningful command of Babylonian Aramaic.

ban issues from a time prior to the commentaries of the school of Mainz (that currently go under the name of R. Gershom), prior to the famed commentaries of Rashi and those of R. Hanan'el of Kairouan and R. Yosef ibn Megas. Who was so confident of his understanding of the abrupt and gnomic text of the Talmud that he would regularly presume to emend it? Who was so confident of his control of eastern Aramaic that he *could* emend the talmudic text? To give a contemporary example: what Talmudist of today could systematically emend *Bereshit Rabbah*—a text written in the dialect of third- and fourth-century Galilean Aramaic? The Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmud was as new and as alien to Ashkenazic Jews at the turn of the first millennium as the Galilean Aramaic of the *midrashim* is to us today. No doubt there were some bold souls who rushed in where angels fear to tread, but was the phenomenon so widespread that it demanded a communal ban? Is it not more plausible that if emendation was rampant, or in danger of becoming rampant, these corrections were being made on the basis of extant manuscripts? Let us assume for a moment (we shall soon see why such an assumption is plausible) that many different textual traditions were circulating in Ashkenaz in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. Whenever a group of Jews gathered to study the Talmud, each held in his hand a different manuscript, quite possibly of a different tradition. When the group encountered a difficulty in the Talmud, nothing would have been more natural than to check the differing texts of the various members and to emend the other manuscripts according to the reading that they felt was best.

The pressing need for emendation unquestionably existed at the time. What is meant by such medieval Ashkenazic terms as 'the book [i.e. version of the Talmud] of Rabbenu Gershom Me'or ha-Golah' or 'the book of R. Yitshak ben Yehudah [of eleventh-century Mainz]?'<sup>9</sup> Not that they personally copied the book—this would not have invested the text with any authority—but rather that its readings had received their imprimatur. It had been edited by them and contained the version that they had judged best—either by their choice of manuscript reading or by their emendation. The need for an authoritative text was felt by all; the danger was that it would be attempted by the unqualified. It seems reasonable that the purpose of R. Gershom's ban was both to preserve for the few truly qualified scholars the wide range of versions

<sup>9</sup> Rabbenu Gershom: sources in V. Aptowitz, *Mavo le-Sefer Ravvayab* (Jerusalem, 1938), 332 n. 10. R. Yitshak b. Yehudah: sources in A. Grossman, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz ha-Rishonim: Koroteihem, Darkam be-Hanbagat ha-Tsibbur, Yetsiratom ha-Ruhanit mi-Reshit Yishuvam ve-ad li-Gezerot Tatnu* (1996), 3rd edn. (Jerusalem, 2001), 316–17. See id., *Hakhmei Tsarfai ha-Rishonim: Koroteihem, Darkam be-Hanbagat ha-Tsibbur, Yetsiratom ha-Ruhanit*, 3rd edn. (Jerusalem, 2001), 113, for 'the book of R. Yitshak ben Menaheem'.

that were circulating and to preclude their corruption at the hands of the ignorant.

Seeing that the manuscript evidence goes back only to Rashi (d. 1105), why should we assume that different manuscript traditions were circulating in mid-tenth-century Ashkenaz generally, and in Mainz, the city of Rabbenu Gershom (d. 1028), in particular? It is the economic role of contemporary Mainz that leads to this assumption. A Jewish traveler from Spain, Ibrāhīm b. Yaq'ub, who traveled around northern Europe during R. Gershom's youth (c.965), reported thus of Mainz:

This is a great city . . . she dwells in the land of the Franks on a river called 'Rin' . . . One sees there dirhams that were minted in Samarkand with the name of the master of the mint and the date of 301–302 [i.e. 913–14] . . . It is astonishing that a person can find in Mainz, that is to say, at the far ends of the West, perfumes and spices that originate at the far ends of the East, such as pepper, ginger, cloves, Indian nard, 'custus', and galin-gale. These plants are brought from India where they grow in abundance.<sup>10</sup>

Ibrāhīm b. Yaq'ub need not have been surprised. Mainz was the final station of two of the three overland trade routes from the Near and Far East. One road led from the Black Sea through Kiev, Przemyśl, Cracow, Prague, Regensburg, and thence to Mainz. The other followed the Danube to Esztergom (Hungary), Raffelstettin (on the eastern border of the German Empire), and Regensburg, and ended equally at Mainz.<sup>11</sup> Jewish merchants were active in these trails; they were similarly involved in the lucrative trade of luxury goods that arrived in Mainz from the East via the port of Venice and the Alpine passes; so much so that the Venetian authorities sought to have them expelled from Mainz.<sup>12</sup> These trade routes led to Mainz because it was situated oppo-

<sup>10</sup> A. Miquel, 'L'Europe occidentale dans la relation arabe d'Ibrāhīm b. Yaq'ub (X<sup>e</sup> s.)', *Annales: ESC*, 21 (1966), 1059–60.

<sup>11</sup> A. Gieysztor, 'Les Juifs et leurs activités économiques en Europe orientale', in *Gli Ebrei Nell'alto Medioevo*, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'alto Medioevo 26 (Spoleto, 1980), i. 506–11; T. Lewicki, 'Les Commerçants juifs dans l'Orient islamique non-méditerranéen au IX<sup>e</sup>–XI<sup>e</sup> siècle', *ibid.* 375–401; W. G. Haussig, 'Praxis und Verbreitung des jüdischen Handels in Südrussland', in H. Jankuhn and E. Ebel, eds., *Untersuchungen zu Handel und Verkehr der vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Zeit in Mittel- und Nordeuropa*, vi: *Organisationsformen der Kaufmannsvereinigungen in der Spätantike und im frühen Mittelalter*, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaft in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse 183 (Göttingen, 1989), 27, 31–2.

<sup>12</sup> M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce 700–900* (Cambridge, 2001), 796, 970; G. Caro, *Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Juden im Mittelalter und der Neuzeit*, 2nd edn. (Frankfurt am Main, 1924), i. 193. A letter from both the Doge and the Archbishop of Venice requested that the Jews be either banned from handling items with crosses, as they desecrated them, or expelled from the city. Caro pointed out that numerous Ottonian coins had embossed

site Ingelheim, the seat of the winter palace of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious. The importance of Ingelheim diminished somewhat under the later Carolingians, but its imperial palace returned to favor under the Ottonians. Whatever the lot of Ingelheim, the centrality and affluence of the Rhineland only increased with time. It was one of the economic pillars of the empire. In tenth- and eleventh-century Germany there were no wealthy, independent urban centers. All large, nodal points of settlement belonged either to a bishop, an abbey, or the emperor. Wealth was concentrated in the hands of the masters of these centers, and they alone had the buying power to attract large-scale luxury trade.<sup>13</sup> No area had a greater concentration of such hubs than the Rhineland and no region held forth a larger prospect of rich consumption, as Michael McCormick's map of transalpine coin movements strikingly illustrates (see Map 1).<sup>14</sup> Centrally located 'on the river called the Rin', the commercial highway of the empire, the 'great city' of Mainz in the tenth century retained its status as an emporium.

In the mid-ninth century Jewish merchants, the Radhanites, traveled to India and China. Upon their return from the East, some of them made for Constantinople to sell their treasures to the 'Romans' (the Byzantines); others headed towards 'the residence of the king of the Franks to dispose of their wares'.<sup>15</sup> Many scholars believe that the trade with the East was predominantly in Jewish hands; others deny this.<sup>16</sup> All, however, are agreed that the Jews were lively participants in this commerce.

crosses; such an injunction, then, would have effectively excluded Jews from commerce. The commercial implications of the request would also explain why the Doge of Venice joined the Archbishop of Venice in what was ostensibly a purely religious matter.

<sup>13</sup> T. Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages: 800–1056* (London and New York, 1991), 233; A. Haverkamp, 'Die "frühbürgerliche" Welt im hohen und späten Mittelalter: Landesgeschichte und Geschichte der städtischen Gesellschaft', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 221 (1975), 571–602. On Ingelheim, see P. Classen, 'Die Geschichte der Königspfalz Ingelheim bis zur Verpfändung an die Kurpfalz 1375', in *Ingelheim am Rhein. Forschungen und Studien zur Geschichte Ingelheims* (Ingelheim am Rhein, 1964), 87–116. For the significant archeological findings of the past decades, see H. Grewe, 'Die Ausgrabungen in der Königspfalz zu Ingelheim am Rhein', in *Deutsche Königspfalzen. Beiträge zu ihrer historischen und archäologischen Erforschung*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 11/5 (2001), 155–74. I would like to thank Rainer Barzen for drawing my attention to the last work.

<sup>14</sup> McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (above, n. 12), 686.

<sup>15</sup> *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World: Illustrative Documents*, trans. with introd. and notes by R. S. Lopez and I. W. Raymond (New York, 1955), 32. For a German translation from the original Arabic account (rather than the English translation of a French translation as in the case of Lopez and Raymond's text), see the references in McCormick (above, n. 12), 689 n. 72. A Hebrew translation from the original can be found in M. Gil, *Be-Malkhut Yishma'el bi-Tekufat ha-Ge'onim* (Tel Aviv, 1997), i. 614, and see pp. 611–35 for a comprehensive discussion of the Radhanite narrative.

<sup>16</sup> See above, n. 12, and see the rich bibliography in M. Toch, 'Jews and Commerce: Modern Fan-

At this time, we hear of 'hordes' (*cohortes*) of merchants that traveled from Germany to Saragossa in Spain, and, not surprisingly, they stopped at Mainz.<sup>17</sup> We also know that in 876 Charles the Bald sent ten pounds of silver for the reconstruction of the church in Barcelona by means of his Jewish emissary, Judas. It would appear that cultivating the Spanish periphery of the empire was equally the policy of Louis the Pious two generations before, when he took under his protection Abraham the Jew from Saragossa. Historians have assumed that the release from the numerous tolls that he accorded Abraham was not simply an act of benevolence, but rather part of a policy to encourage trade with Muslim Spain or to ensure for the imperial palace a steady supply of goods from Islamic countries, similar to requirement made of merchants with imperial protection 'to appear in our palace in mid-May once every year or two'.<sup>18</sup> Rather than detailing each and every contact that the Rhineland had with Spain, Italy, Kairouan, Egypt, Palestine, Constantinople, and Baghdad, I would point to the map drawn by McCormick entitled 'Merchant Communications, 700–900' (Map 2), which graphically demonstrates the extent to which the Rhineland was linked with the wider world of the time.<sup>19</sup>

Spices and condiments from the East arrived in Mainz in abundance; so too did objects of religious significance. The Christian world attached great importance to relics, palpable remains of their sacred past, such as the hem of the robe of Jesus or of one of the Apostles, a chip of the rock on which Mary had sat, a staff that a saint or martyr had held, and the like. These fragments of wood, cloth, and stone radiated potent sanctity and were held in awe and reverence by believers; they added great prestige, even power, to those fortunate

cies and Medieval Realities', in *Il ruolo economico delle minoranze in Europa. Sec. XIII–XVIII*, Atti della XXXI Settimana di Studi, Istituto Francesco Datini, Prato (Florence, 2000), 43–58. See also the cautious formulation of J.-P. Devroey and C. Brouwer in 'La Participation des Juifs au commerce dans le monde franc (VI<sup>e</sup>–X<sup>e</sup> siècles)', in A. Dierkens and J.-M. Sansterre, eds., *Voyages et voyageurs à Byzance et en Occident du VI<sup>e</sup> au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège 278 (Geneva, 2000), 339–74.

<sup>17</sup> McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (above, n. 12), 674–7.

<sup>18</sup> F. Rörig, 'Magdeburgs Entstehung und die ältere Handelsgeschichte', in id., *Wirtschaftskräfte im Mittelalter. Abhandlungen zur Stadt- und Hansegeschichte*, ed. P. Kaegbein, 2nd edn. (Vienna and Cologne, 1971), 607–10; B. Blumenkranz, *Juifs et chrétiens dans le monde occidental: 430–1096*, Études juives 2 (Paris, 1960), 17–18.

<sup>19</sup> McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (above, n. 12), 676. Our interest lies with the rich network of communication that McCormick has traced, not with any specific thesis of his—for example, that it was the growing trade in the Mediterranean rather than the upsurge of commerce in the north that proved instrumental in the economic revival of the West. See e.g. *Early European History*, 12 (2003), an issue devoted to a discussion of McCormick's book.



# MAP 1. Transalpine coin movements

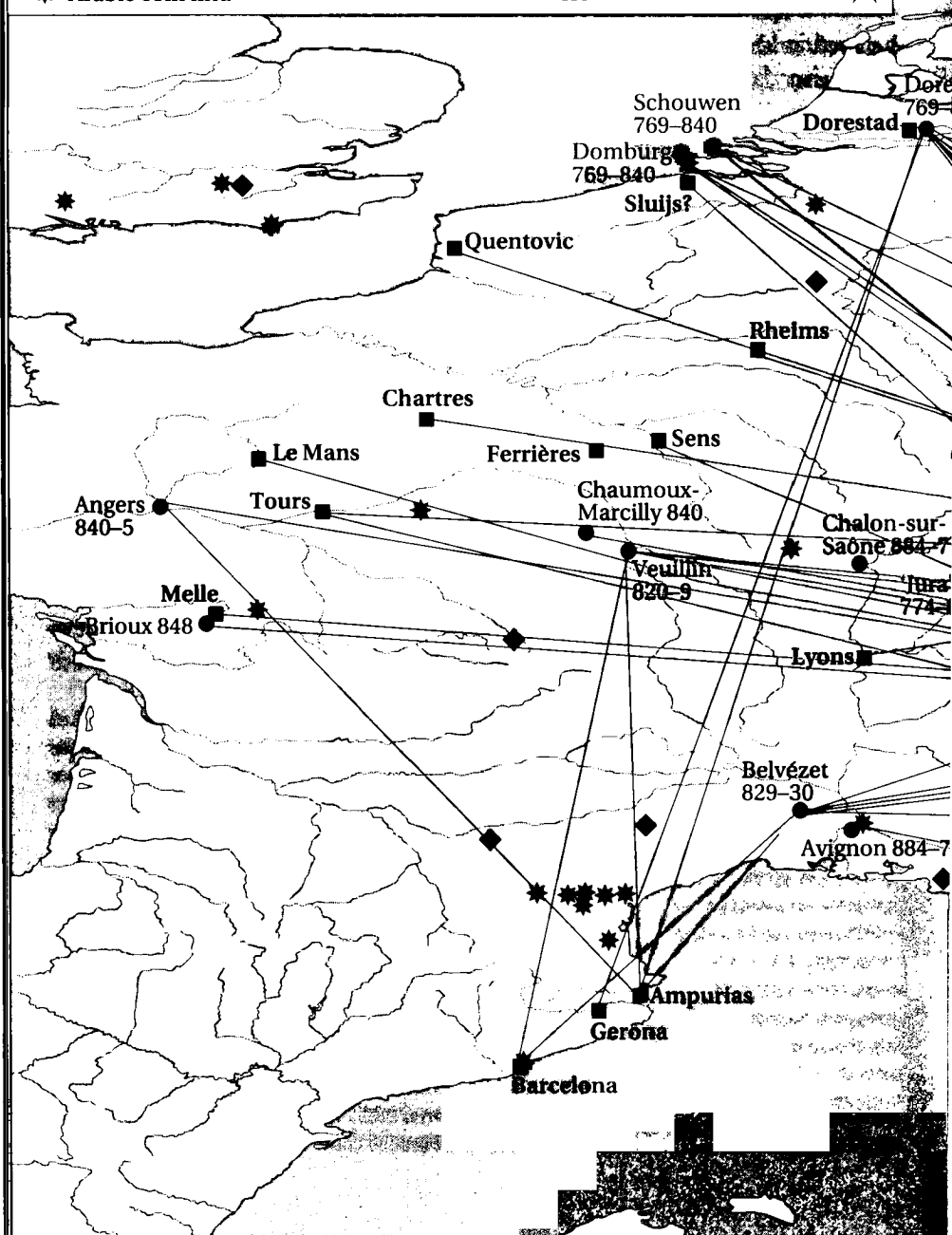
Equal area cylindrical projection

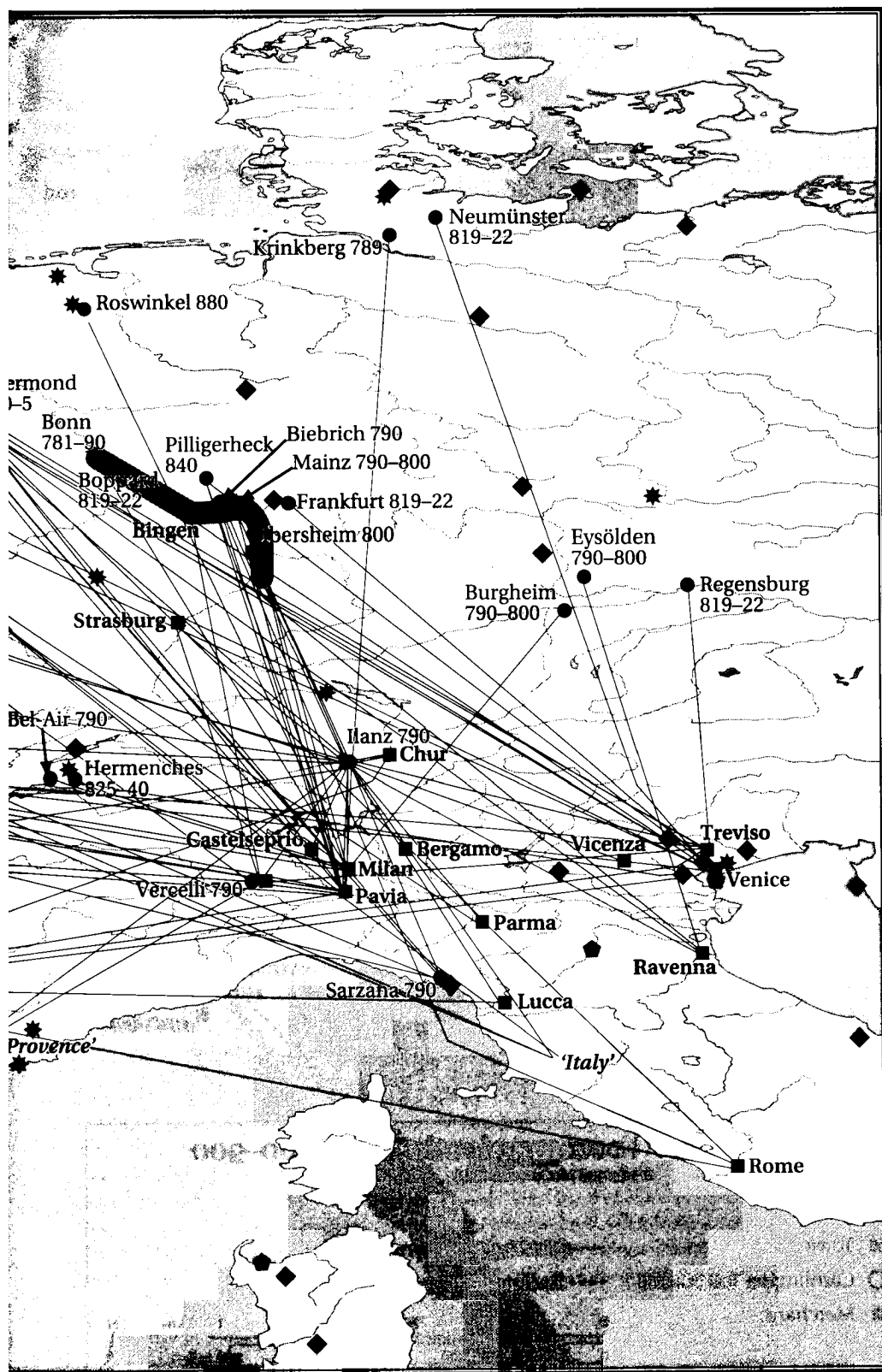
© Michael McCormick 2001; position of Rhineland added

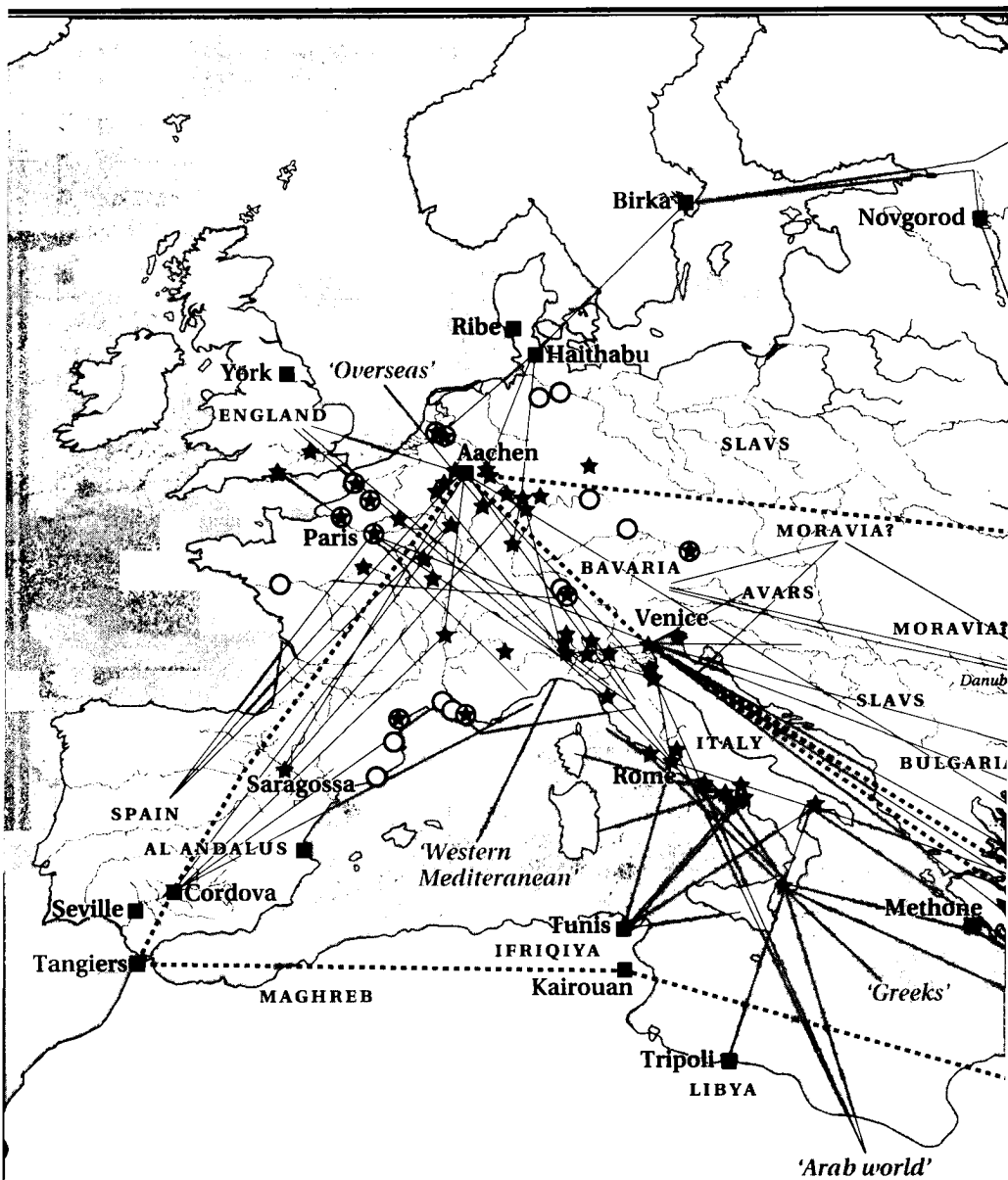
## Key

- Town and/or mint
- Find spot
- ◆ Byzantine coin find
- ★ Arabic coin find
- ◆ Mixed Arabic and Byzantine coin find
- ☞ Rhineland

0 100 200 300 400 km  
0 50 100 150 200 250 miles







## MAP 2. Merchant communications, AD 700–900

Hammer-Aitoff projection © Michael McCormick 2001

### Key

■ Town

— Movement of commerce

○ Carolingian Toll Station

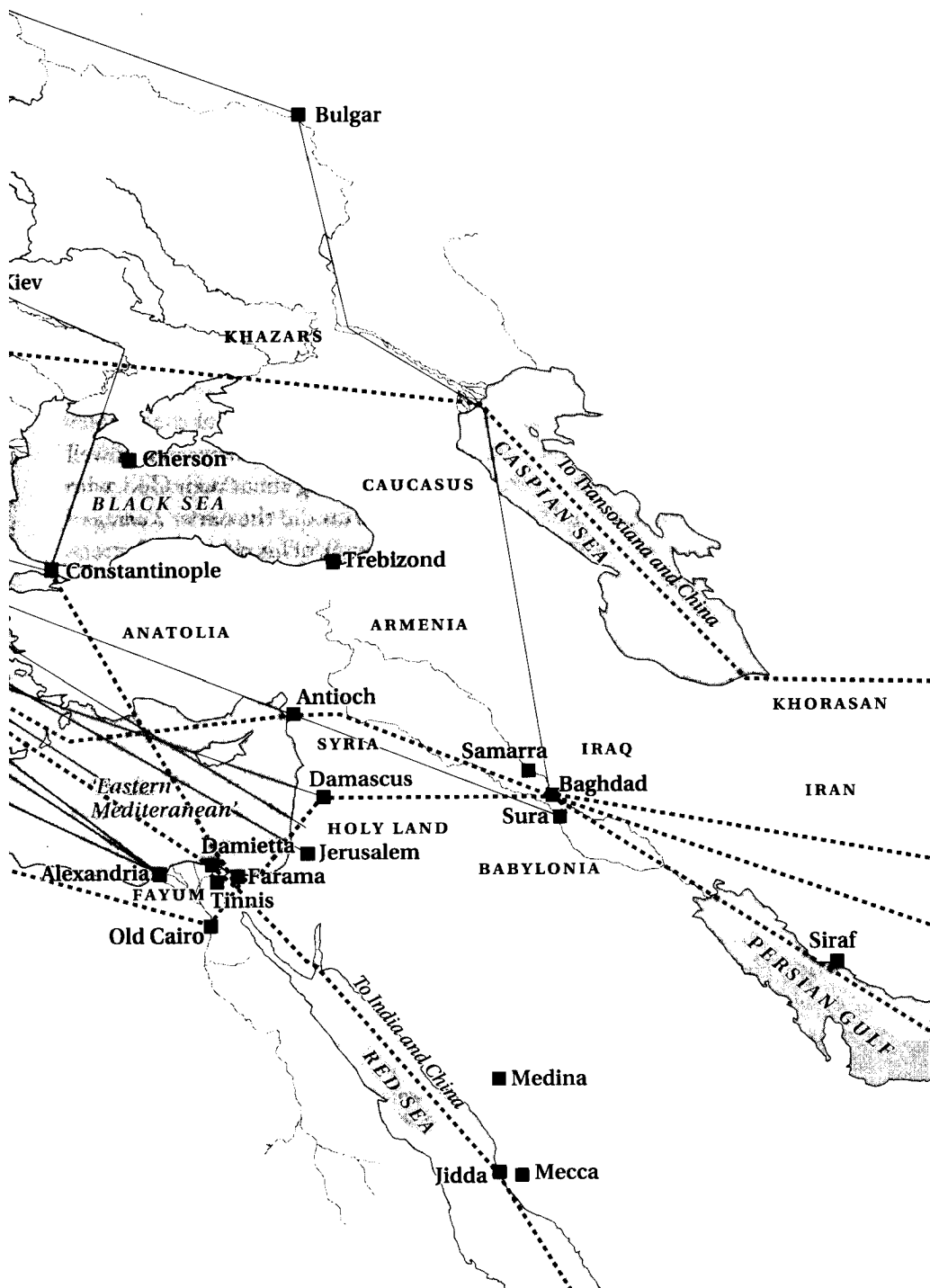
.... Radhanite routes

★ Merchant

0 350 700 1050 1400 km  
0 160 320 480 640 800 miles



eloozero



enough to own them. Churches and monasteries vied for their possession and were willing to pay dearly for their acquisition. Christians imported them frequently from Mediterranean countries and took care to authenticate these imports. Some of these authenticating labels or tags have survived. Around 800, Charlemagne sent his famous delegation to Haroun al Rashid in Baghdad, which included Isaac the Jew, who served possibly as the guide, possibly as the interpreter. About this time, the aristocratic nunnery in Chelles, not far from Paris, received a relic whose authenticating tag stated that it came from an area '[between] the rivers of the Tigris and the Euphrates'.<sup>20</sup> Is it implausible that Isaac the Jew (or his attendants) sought equally to obtain in Baghdad or Sura or from other Jewish centers '[between] the Tigris and the Euphrates' religious objects dear to him?

Jews were not interested in a patch from the cloak of Elijah or in pieces of Moses' rod, but they were starved for knowledge: for some *midrashim* that would flesh out the sparse biblical narratives and tell them about the country from which they came and something of the world in which they would dwell after their death; for books that would reveal something about their God, who was so different from the God of their neighbors (as did the *Shi'ur Komah*—the book of the mystical dimensions of the Godhead), of his palaces and attendants and his infinite glory (as did the books of the Heikhalot), and, perhaps above all, of his law, to whose upholding they were committed and which set them so apart from their Gentile neighbors.<sup>21</sup> Let us never forget that both Christianity and Judaism were eastern religions, and the Jews of Ashkenaz and their Gentile neighbors lived in the far end of the West. Both eagerly sought out the sources of their religion in the East and endeavored to bring home some of their tangible remains. Man does not live by bread alone. Religion is a need and need creates demand, and the avenues of trade and communication will supply that need, for people will pay well for what they deeply desire, be it material or spiritual consignments.

Moreover, it was in these centuries that the Oral Law was being first committed to writing. In the famed Babylonian academies of Sura and Pumbedita no written texts were employed, but rather the words were recited by *tanna'im* or *garsanim*, carefully selected individuals who had meticulously memorized

<sup>20</sup> McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (above, n. 12), 313, and see pp. 283–318.

<sup>21</sup> See Agobard Lugdunensis, 'De judaïcis superstitionibus', *Opera Omnia*, ed. L. van Acker, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 52 (Turnhout, 1981), 205–6. On the Jewish sources to which Agobard refers and which were then circulating in the Carolingian Empire, see the references in B. Blumenkranz, *Les Auteurs chrétiens latins du Moyen Âge sur les Juifs et le judaïsme* (Paris, 1963), 165 n. 62. On the date of the missive, see most recently C. Geisel, *Die Juden im Frankenreich: Von den Merowingern bis zum Tode Ludwigs des Frommen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998), 575–81.

large sections of the Talmud.<sup>22</sup> With the emergence of Jewish settlements in the Islamic empire, texts of the Talmud began to circulate there. One can also reasonably assume that some written guides to religious conduct existed then in Ashkenaz, but they were unofficial and non-binding, more in the nature of cribs than of codes. The tiny clusters of Jews, far removed from the major Diaspora settlements as Kairouan or Lucena, lived their life by mimetic transmission, by observing and reproducing the way of life of parents and teachers. What could have been more important, indeed epoch-making, for these meager settlements than to have received for the first time in their history some authoritative guide to the observance of the Sabbath or of Passover from the legendary academies of Sura and Pumbedita, not to speak of a tractate of the Talmud or some parts of the famed geonic codes, such as the *Halakhot Pesukot* or the *Halakhot Gedolot*? To possess such an authoritative work was truly a blessing. It also bestowed on its possessor considerable prestige and not inconsiderable religious authority.

Many routes led from west to east, not the least of which was the slave route. The Radhanites, Jews who might have originated in the environs of Baghdad, were active, possibly even played a controlling role, in this trade.<sup>23</sup> Around 745 a bubonic plague epidemic swept through the Islamic lands. It is estimated that Islam lost about 25–35 percent of its followers in the seven years of this scourge. There was a desperate need for labor, and the door opened wide to the slave trade. Christian Europe, in turn, saw this as an opportunity to reverse its negative trade balance with Islam. Christians were forbidden to enslave their co-religionists; however, to the east, Slavic lands were inhabited by pagans, and war parties set out to enslave and sell them to the Muslims. So ubiquitous was this trade that the word for ‘slave’ in English, French, German, and Italian is derived from ‘Slav’.<sup>24</sup> Medieval Jews, in turn, called Moravia

<sup>22</sup> See Y. Sussmann, ‘Torah she-be-’al Peh Peshutah ke-Mashma’ah: Ko’ho shel Kutso shel Yod’, in *Mehkerei Talmud*, 3 (2005), 209–384; N. Danzig, ‘Mi-Talmud ’al Peh le-Talmud bi-Khetav: ’Al Derekh Mesirat ha-Talmud ha-Bavli ve-Limmudo bi-Yemei ha-Beinayim’, in *Sefer ha-Shanah shel Universitat Bar-Ilan—Madda’ei ha-Yahadut u-Madda’ei ha-Ruah*, 30–1 (2006), 49–112. In light of what I propose in Chapter 9, this paragraph describes Ashkenazic settlements prior to the arrival of the men of the Third Yeshivah. Once settled in Mainz, they naturally took advantage of the riches of that emporium. See below, p. 196, for the openness of the men of the Third Yeshivah to alternative readings in the text of the Talmud.

<sup>23</sup> M. Gil, ‘The Radhanite Merchants and the Land of Radhan’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 17 (1974), 299–328. See, however, Jacobi’s critique, cited by McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (above, n. 12), 688 n. 71.

<sup>24</sup> The fullest and most recent discussion of the slave trade with Islam is that of McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (above, n. 12), 733–76; on the bubonic plague, *ibid.* 504–5, 753, and 113 n. 124.

(which was then pagan) 'the land of Canaan' after the biblical verse: 'Accursed be Canaan. He shall be his brother's meanest slave.'<sup>25</sup>

The current scholarly consensus is that the Jews were the major slave traders in the early Middle Ages.<sup>26</sup> The Christian world would not allow Muslim infidels to traverse and trade freely in its territory. The Christians living in Muslim countries were also a tolerated minority; however, they were bitterly divided into sects and it is doubtful whether one group would lend sufficient help, if any, to Christian traders of another sectarian persuasion. The Jews, however, were a tolerated minority—and a reasonably monolithic one—both in the Islamic and in the Christian worlds. The Diaspora provided Jews with an international network of contacts: communities that would welcome, house, and advise them during their stay. These local co-religionists could further serve as intermediaries between them and the different populations through which they moved. A merchant who traveled internationally also passed through many different legal systems. If he sought to do some business in these locales, he had to master their legal intricacies. The ability to have local, knowledgeable co-religionists serve as intermediaries between the merchant and the general population lightened that burden considerably. Again, a map by McCormick will serve to illustrate the multiple routes of the slave trade (Map 3).<sup>27</sup>

Recently historians, most notably Michael Toch, have begun to challenge vigorously the scope of Ashkenazic Jewish involvement both in international trade in general and in the slave trade in particular.<sup>28</sup> However, all agree that Ashkenazic Jews were predominantly traders and, more important, were purveyors to the imperial and ecclesiastical courts. They appear thus in Latin sources from the sixth-century chronicle of Gregory of Tours down to documents from the end of the tenth century from Vienne, twenty miles south of Lyons (*negotia monachorum*).<sup>29</sup> A similar picture emerges from the Hebrew sources of Ashkenaz, from the responsa literature that first appears at the

<sup>25</sup> Gen. 8: 25–6. The translation is that of the *Jerusalem Bible* (London, 1966).

<sup>26</sup> See the literature cited in M. Toch, 'Jews and Commerce' (above, n. 16), 43–58.

<sup>27</sup> McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (above, n. 12), 762.

<sup>28</sup> See M. Toch, 'Jews and Commerce' (above, n. 16), 43–58, to which add 'Wirtschaft und Verfolgung: die Bedeutung der Ökonomie für die Kreuzzugspogrome des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts. Mit einem Anhang zum Sklavenhandel der Juden', in A. Haverkamp, ed., *Juden und Christen zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge* (Sigmaringen, 1999), 253–85. A fuller discussion of the issue of slavery is available in his Hebrew article 'Yehudei Eiropah bi-Yemei ha-Beinayim ha-Mukdamim: Soharei 'Avadim?', *Zion*, 64 (1999), 39–64. See also his general survey, 'The Jews in Europe: 500–1050', in the *New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge, 2005), i. 555–61.

<sup>29</sup> J. Aronius, *Regesten zur Geschichte der Juden im Fränkischen und Deutschen Reiche bis zum Jahre 1273* (repr. Hildesheim, 1970), ##122, 129, 132–4; Blumenkranz, *Juifs et chrétiens* (above, n. 18), 15–19;

end of the tenth and the early decades of the eleventh centuries. Jews are frequently portrayed there as selling to the courts of bishops, local rulers, and even the queen of Hungary.<sup>30</sup> We further find there the institution of *ma'arufya*, a widely employed communal ordinance that forbade a Jew from competing with a co-religionist who until then had been the exclusive purveyor to a Gentile or his factotum. As Toch has written: 'The customers of these [Jewish] merchants [governed by the *ma'arufya* ban] came exclusively from the Christian elite, both secular and ecclesiastical.'<sup>31</sup>

Imagine a Gentile merchant who brings luxury items from the East to sell to local rulers in the German Empire. He knows that among the buyers there are Jewish purveyors to the court and, naturally, he would like to get on their good side. He also knows that for some reason they are eager to receive any written material, even the smallest work, from Babylonia or Palestine. Would he not take care to bring such material with him as presents or to sell it at a high price when he reached Ashkenaz? Wouldn't Jewish purveyors order on their own initiative such books or scrolls? Would they abstain from making contact with the historic, vital centers of their religion? Would they forgo such an opportunity for enlightenment, for taking instruction from the ancient and far-famed seats of learning in Babylonia?

The links with the East were not simply commercial. Numerous pilgrims and envoys also made their way to Constantinople and Jerusalem during this period. Charlemagne kept an eye on the Franks in Jerusalem, and a survey that he had instituted showed that close to one-quarter of the priests and monks in Jerusalem were of Latin (i.e. west European) origin. Between the years 700 and 900 no fewer than 239 emissaries and pilgrims made their way to sacred places in the East, primarily to Constantinople (the city richest in sacred relics) and to Jerusalem: 62 percent came from Italy and 26 percent from the Carolingian Empire.<sup>32</sup> Would not a Jewish pilgrim or merchant have made some effort to reach the famed, almost sacred, academies of Sura and Pumbedita, in whose halls the Talmud had been composed, and bring home some scrolls or codices? Nor did these travelers have to go so far afield as Babylonia.

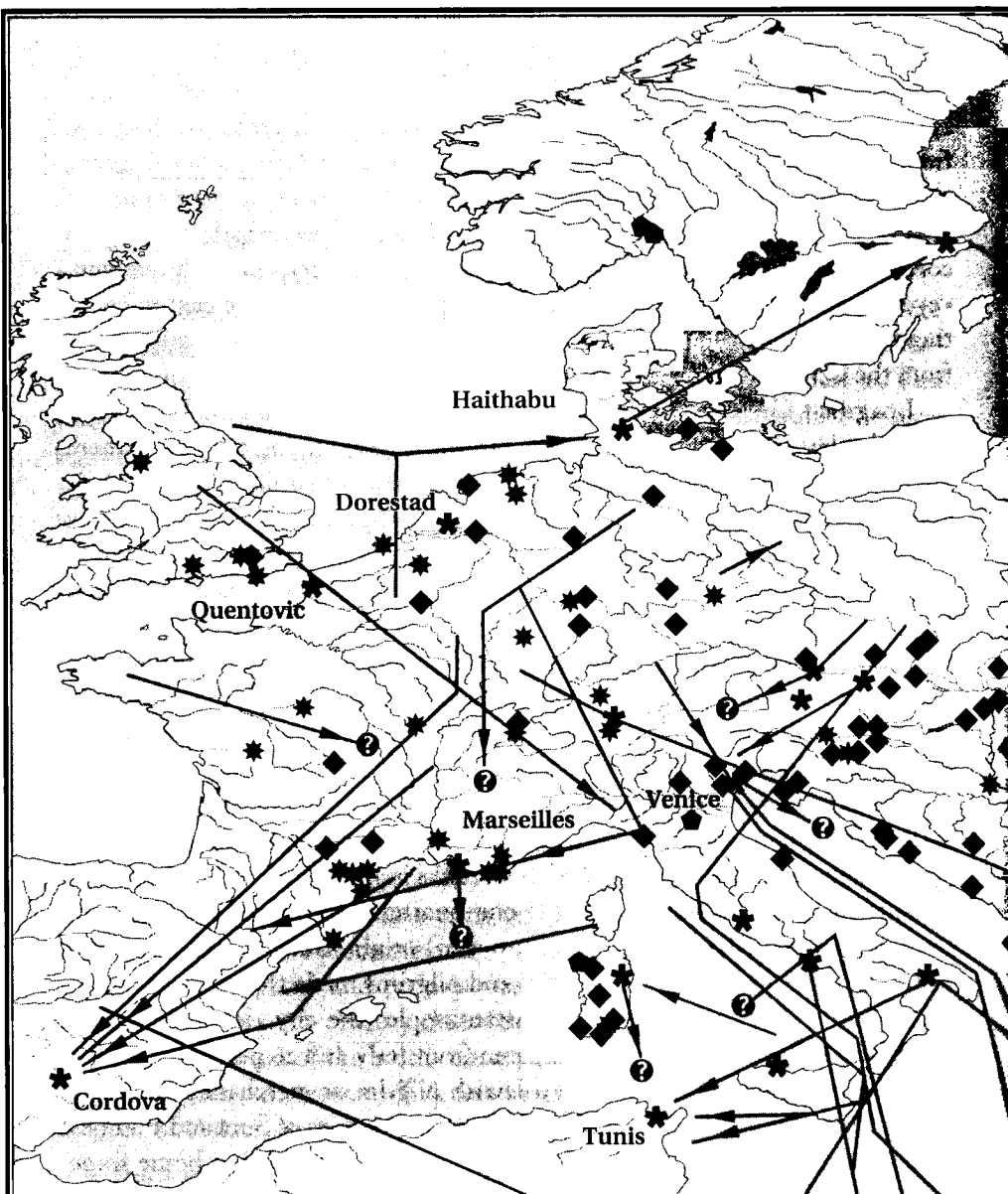
J.-P. Devroey and C. Brouwer, 'La Participation des Juifs au commerce' (above, n. 16), 361-3; M. Toch, 'Jews and Commerce' (above, n. 16), 43-58, and the previous note.

<sup>30</sup> On *ma'arufya*, see S. Eidelberg, 'Ma'arufia in Rabbenu Gershom's Responsa', *Historia Judaica*, 15 (1953), 59-67; repr. in id., *Medieval Ashkenazic History: Studies on German Jewry in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1999), 11-20.

<sup>31</sup> M. Toch, 'Pe'ilutam ha-Kalkalit shel Yehudei Germanyah ba-Me'ot ha-'Asirit 'ad ha-Sheteim-'Esreh: Bein Historiografyah le-Historyah', in Y. T. Assis, J. Cohen, et al., eds., *Yehudim mul ha-Tselav: Gezerot Tatnu ba-Historiografyah u-va-Historyah* (Jerusalem, 2000), 43-4.

<sup>32</sup> McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (above, n. 12), 129-73, esp. pp. 153-8.





### MAP 3. European slave exports,

**AD 700-900**

© Michael McCormick 2001; Baghdad added

Equal area cylindrical projection

#### Key

◆ Byzantine coin find

★ Arabic coin find

⬠ Mixed Arabic and  
Byzantine coin find

✱ Market or concentration  
of slaves

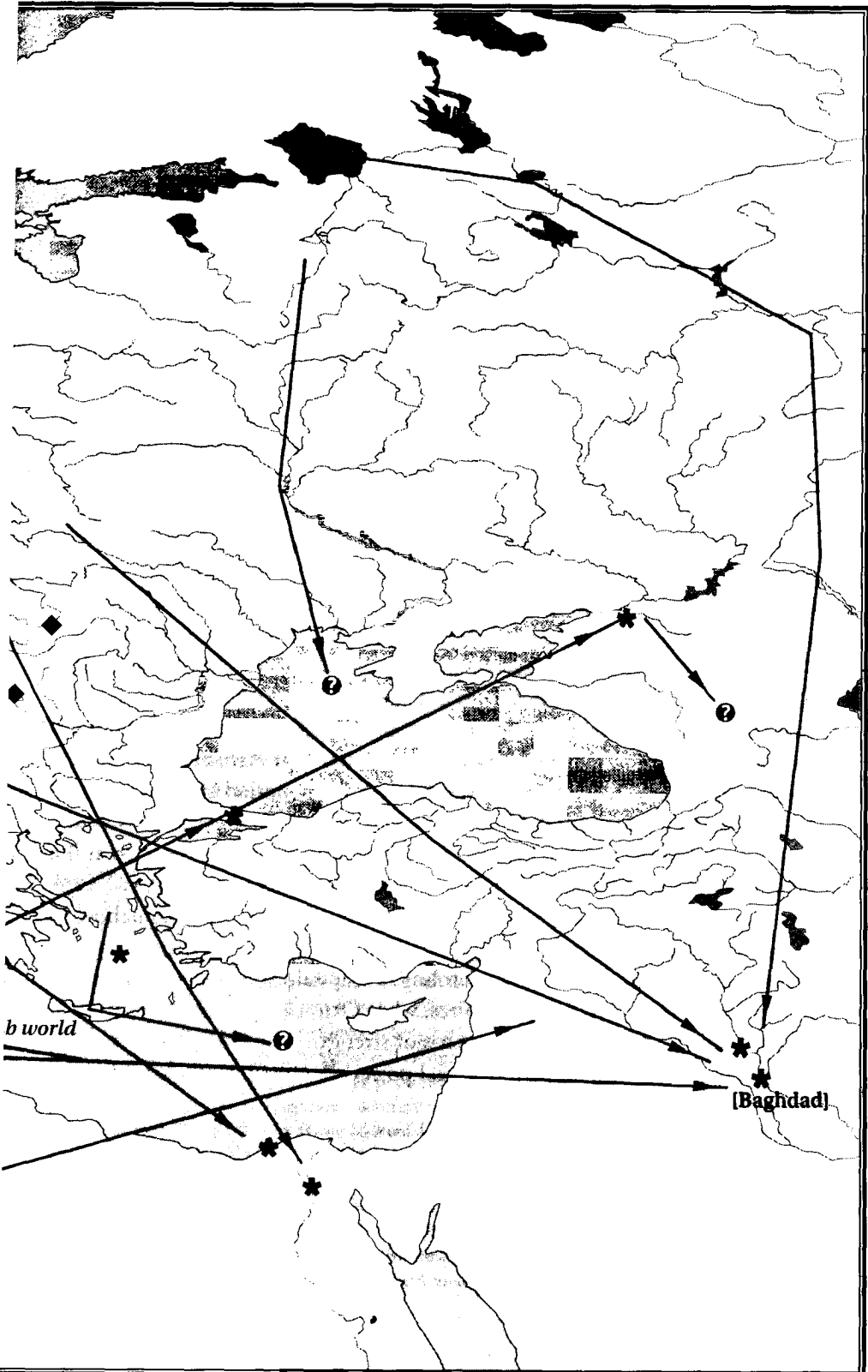
➔ Movements of slaves

② Unspecified destination

0 300 600 900 1200 km

0 150 300 450 600 750 miles





There was no lack of Jewish settlements in Jerusalem, Ramla, Tiberias, and Damascus that followed the Babylonian teachings. Damascus even served as an entrepôt for donations from the Maghreb to the Babylonian yeshivot.<sup>33</sup> Travelers from Ashkenaz could have acquired Babylonian works with equal ease in Fustat (Old Cairo) and in the Maghreb. Finally, one should note that, most probably, there is a reference to a direct, early contact between Ashkenaz and the Babylonian Geonate. Jewish merchants who visited the fair at Saint-Denis, outside Paris, sent a query in Jewish law in the middle of the ninth century to the head of one of the Babylonian academies, R. Natronai Gaon of Pumbedita.<sup>34</sup>

The map of the slave trade shows many roads leading to Baghdad and on the map of communication and commerce numerous lines converge on Aachen, the capital of the Carolingian Empire, as well as on the Rhineland, a major pillar of the Ottonian Empire. Is it at all surprising that a superb Spanish manuscript of tractate *Megillah* has many readings typical of Ashkenazic manuscripts or that there are striking similarities between readings in Ashkenazic manuscripts and those found in the Cairo Genizah? Is it any wonder that the Ashkenazic manuscripts of tractate *Sanhedrin* reproduce scribal traditions of the Maghreb (R. Hanan'el) and of Spain (R. Me'ir Abul'afia), or that Rashi's textual emendations to that tractate reflect a text in part similar to that found in Yemen? With spices came books and even, perhaps, as Noam has surmised,<sup>35</sup> commentarial traditions. Yemen and Ashkenaz, seemingly the antipodes of the Jewish world, were linked in this period by ongoing commercial contacts.

Early Ashkenaz was not located in some remote and isolated region at the far ends of the known earth of the time, whose only link to other Jewish centers was via some Alpine paths that led to Italy and from there somehow to Palestine. The Rhineland, in which the imperial palace of Ingelheim was located, and nearby Aachen, the Carolingian capital, were the very heartland of the Carolingian and Salian empires, what Otto of Friesing in the twelfth century called *maxima vis regni*, 'the major strength of the kingdom', or, more idiomatically, 'the backbone of imperial power'.<sup>36</sup> The unparalleled purchas-

<sup>33</sup> M. Gil, *Be-Malkhut Yishma'el bi-Tekufat ha-Ge'onim* (above, n. 15), i. 153, and see pp. 149–205.

<sup>34</sup> *Teshuvot R. Natronai bar Hil'ai Ga'on*, ed. Y. (Robert) Brody (Jerusalem, 1994), ii. 243, and see McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (above, n. 12), 650–1 and n. 44. For the meaning of 'Farangia' in this responsum, see M. Gil, *Be-Malkhut Yishma'el bi-Tekufat ha-Ge'onim* (above, n. 15), i. 625 n. 349. (There remains an outside chance that the letter concerned the market in Ephesus in Asia Minor and not that of St. Denis.) <sup>35</sup> V. Noam, 'Mesorot Nusah Kedumot' (above, n. 2), 117–34.

<sup>36</sup> O. von Freising, *Otonis et Rabewini Gesta Friderici I. imperatoris*, ed. G. Waitz and B. von

ing power of the estates and palaces of the emperor and of local bishops and rulers attracted goods from the four ends of the earth—China, India, Babylonia, Palestine, Spain, and the Maghreb. The port of Venice further linked the Rhineland with Egypt and Yemen. Ashkenaz and ‘Lotir’ may well have been the richest zone of Europe and, from the point of view of demand and consumption, the economic center of Latin Christendom. Not surprisingly they served as a magnet for all the treasures of the East, including those of the spirit.

In brief, there is no more reason to assume a Palestinian base for the culture of Ashkenaz than a Babylonian one. Ashkenaz had equal access to the treasures of both of these Near Eastern Jewish cultures. From the polemical letter against the Jews that Agobard of Lyons wrote to Emperor Louis the Pious in Aachen in the third decade of the ninth century we know that in the area of *kashrut*, Carolingian Jews followed the Babylonian prescriptions when they conflicted with those of Palestine.<sup>37</sup> We also know that in the area of *yein neseekh*, the ban on wine that had been touched by a Gentile, the rulings of Early Ashkenaz were in keeping with those of Babylonia rather than those of Palestine.<sup>38</sup>

I should emphasize that this in no way precludes Palestinian influences in other spheres of religious life. We have seen that such influence exists to a small degree in prayer, and it may equally exist, to a far greater extent, in other areas. It certainly does not forestall influences in the interstices of halakhah, as in the pre-Av mourning for the destruction of the Second Temple, about which the Babylonian Talmud says nothing. Such influences, however, must

Simpson, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum in usum scholarum* 46 (Hanover and Leipzig, 1912), 28.

<sup>37</sup> Agobard Lugdunensis, ‘De insolentia judaeorum’, *Opera Omnia*, ed. L. van Acker, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievals* 52 (Turnhout, 1981), 193. Agobard’s letter certainly is informative of the conduct of the Jews in Lyons. To my thinking, it is equally revelatory of the Jews in Lotharingia, the seat of the empire. I cannot believe that Agobard, who saw himself as being the object of persecution by influential Jews of the court, would not have taken care to see that these Jewish practices were equally observed in and around Aachen, or even more broadly, in Lotharingia generally. Otherwise, the court Jews could prove him a liar by simply asking the emperor to ascertain in local Jewish settlements if Agobard’s descriptions were accurate. See ‘Agobard of Lyons, *Megillat Ahima’ats*, and the Babylonian Orientation of Early Ashkenaz’, above, p. 13. (It also appeared in Hebrew: ‘Berurim ba-Halakhah shel Ashkenaz ha-Kedumah: (a) Agobard, *Megillat Ahima’ats ve-ha-Halakhah ha-’Erets-Yisra’elit*’, in Y. Hacker and Y. Harel, eds., *Lo Yasur Shevet mi-Yehudah: Hanhagah, Rabbanut u-Kehillah be-Toledot Yisra’el* [Jerusalem, 2011], 207–18.) On the date of Agobard’s missives, see most recently C. Geisel, *Die Juden im Frankenreich* (above, n. 21), 575–81.

<sup>38</sup> H. Soloveitchik, *Ha-Yayin bi-Yemei ha-Beinayim—Yein Neseekh: Perek be-Toledot ha-Halakhah be-’Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem, 2008), 321–6.

be proven rather than assumed, for thanks to the recent discoveries mentioned above, the tacit assumption of a century and a half is no longer valid.

In retrospect, these assumptions seem only natural. Like all scholars, the nineteenth-century proponents of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* were only too eager to demonstrate the novel results of their discipline, to show how their findings would dispel common misconceptions. It was axiomatic in that century, as in previous centuries, that Ashkenazic Jewry had lived by the light of the Talmud, meaning of course the Babylonian Talmud, which had guided Jews for over a millennium. Nothing was then more natural when *Wissenschaft* uncovered the Palestinian origin of a score or so of liturgical formulas, or revealed that here and there a custom made sense only in light of Palestinian data, than to proclaim that the origins of Ashkenaz were not what they had seemed; that the religious roots of north European Jewry lay deep in Palestinian soil. Partially from unconscious Zionist motivation, partially because the Pirenne thesis had portrayed Christian Europe as being wholly cut off from the Muslim world, twentieth-century scholars viewed Ashkenaz as tenuously connected to the East. The advances in the study of liturgical poetry (*piyyut*) had further demonstrated that Ashkenazic liturgical poetry had been patterned after Italian models, and Italian models were unquestionably developments of the Palestinian ones.<sup>39</sup> *Piyyut* originated in Palestine, so it was assumed that Ashkenazic religious practices equally had their roots in the same soil. This then linked up with a 'founding story' that spoke of the translation of R. Kalonymos from Lucca to Mainz, and with it the establishment of Ashkenazic culture. That the story never made any claim that the halakhic traditions of Ashkenaz had originated in Italy, only its mystical ones, was overlooked. Equally overlooked or, at least, under-emphasized was its clear statement that these esoteric teachings came not from Palestine but from Babylonia, brought to 'Lombardiyah' by the mysterious 'Abu Aharon of Bagdidim' (i.e. Baghdad).<sup>40</sup> The roots of Ashkenaz lay in Italy; Italy had, in the Byzantine period, ongoing contacts with Palestine; ergo, Ashkenazic culture was rooted in Palestine. Thus the common notion of the cultural origins of the Ashkenazic community was born, and thus it was maintained for well over a century and a half.

Liturgy was more than simply a component of this viewpoint. The enor-

<sup>39</sup> E. Fleischer, *Shirat ha-Kodesh ha-Tvrit bi-Yemei ha-Beinayim* (Jerusalem, 1975), 79–276, 425–84.

<sup>40</sup> Text in Y. Dan, *Torat ha-Sod shel Hasidei Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem, 1968), 14–20. Discussion in Grossman, *Hakbmei Ashkenaz* (above, n. 9), 29–44; J. Schatzmiller, 'Politics and the Myth of Origins', in G. Dahan, ed., *Les Juifs au regard de l'histoire: Mélanges en l'honneur de Bernhard Blumenkranz* (Paris, 1985), 52–4, 61.

mous progress made over the past four decades in the field of liturgical poetry, fueled primarily by the Herculean labors of the late Ezra Fleischer, has endowed that poetry with a significance greater than it deserved. Not that the importance of *piyyut* was exaggerated; it was a fundamental component of Ashkenazic culture. However, its evolution cannot serve as the bellwether of that culture generally. Developments in liturgical poetry are one thing, developments in Jewish law another, and those in religious praxis may yet be different from both. Each area demands investigation on its own terms. In liturgy itself, as distinct from liturgical poetry, we have seen that the influence of Babylonia far outstripped that of Palestine. Indeed, there is no reason even to assume that the Ashkenazic liturgy is cut from one cloth. Certainly, the different textual traditions reflected in the Ashkenazic Talmud point to variegated and multicultural origins. If any place in Europe had broad cultural exposure, free access to the cultural artifacts of both Palestine and Babylonia, and those of Fustat, Yemen, and the Maghreb too, it was the Rhineland and Lotir, the heartland and great emporium of the Carolingian and Ottonian empires.



As a coda, I would note that a recent revolutionary essay of Mendels and Edrei undermines another unarticulated assumption of the Palestinian origins of Ashkenaz.<sup>41</sup> It was reasonably assumed that most (though not all) settlers in northern Europe had arrived from the south, from the Mediterranean littoral with its ancient Jewish settlements. Coming from the former Roman Empire, the Jews naturally brought with them the Palestinian religious way of life, the practices reflected and formulated in the Palestinian Talmud. The customs of the Jews in the East mirrored, more or less, the Babylonian Talmud, and so it was only natural to assume that the practices of the Jews in the West reflected those of the Palestinian Talmud. However, if Mendels and Edrei are correct (and for what it is worth, I believe them to be),<sup>42</sup> the Jews from the empire west of Anatolia brought with them nothing other than a vague biblical

<sup>41</sup> A. Edrei and D. Mendels, 'A Split Jewish Diaspora: Its Dramatic Consequences', *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*, 16/2 (2007), 91–137; 17 (2008), 163–87. An expanded German version has appeared as *Zweierlei Diaspora: Zur Spaltung der antiken jüdischen Welt*, Toldot: Essays zur jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur 8 (Göttingen, 2010).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. J. L. Kurtzer, "What Shall the Alexandrians Do?": Rabbinic Judaism and the Mediterranean Diaspora' (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2008), 234–318; F. Millar, 'A Rural Jewish Community in Late Roman Mesopotamia and the Question of a "Split" Jewish Diaspora', *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, 42 (2011), 364–74, and the reply of Edrei and Mendeles, 'A Split Diaspora Again—A Response to Fergus Millar', *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*, 21 (2012), 305–11.

Judaism. Ashkenazic culture, rabbinic to the core, must then be seen not as a continuation and transformation of the Jewish religious identity of the later Roman Empire, but as a break with an indistinct and tenuous past and a fresh and sharply etched beginning. Lotir and the adjacent Rhineland saw the emergence of a new religious civilization about whose origins and nature we at present know very little.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> See below, Ch. 9.