**PRIMARY SOURCES - Incense**

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| **A.** In the Christian Bible, at the birth of Jesus, He is visited by three "wise men" from the East (often known as the Magi) who come bearing gifts:  ***"And there ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh..."*** |
| New Revised Standard Version Matthew 2:1-12 |
| http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical\_Magi |

**RELIGIOUS BELIEFS TRIBUTE VALUE**

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| **B.** This passage from the Bible shows the rituals for anointing the Tabernacle in the Sinai wilderness:  ***“Moreover, the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, 'Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels and of sweet calmus two hundred and fifty shekels. And of cassia five hundred shekels after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil an hin: And thou shalt make it an oil of holy anointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil.”*** |
| Exodus 30: 22-25 |
| Welch, Jeanie. T*he Spice Trade: a Bibliographic Guide to Sources of Historical and Economic Information*, p. 36. |

**RELIGIOUS BELIEFS USES/RITUALS VALUE**

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| **C.** The Assyrian king recorded his disputes with Samsi, an Arabian queen whose territory was south of his. His successor Sargon II received "all kinds of aromatics" as presents from Queen Samsi:  ***“As for Samsi, Queen of Arabis, I took from her 1,100 prisoners, 30,000 camels, 20,000 oxen, 5,000 measures of spices of all kinds, and she fled for her life, like a wild ass, to the waterless town of Bazu. The people of Mas'a, Tema, Saba', Haiappa, Badana, Hatti, and the tribe of Idiba'leans from far away to the west, knew of my power and bowed to my rule. As one, they brought me tribute; male and female camels and all kinds of spices.”*** |
| Annals of Tiglathpileser III  King of Assyria, 744-727 BC |
| Dalby, Andrew. *Dangerous Tastes: the Story of Spices*, p. 32 |

**SOURCE/ORIGIN TRIBUTE VALUE**

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| **D.** A description of the Queen of Sheba in the Bible:  ***“She came to test him with difficult questions. She brought immense riches to Jerusalem with her, camels laden with spices, great quantities of gold, and precious stones. On coming to Solomon, she opened her mind freely to him; and Solomon had an answer for all her questions, not one of them was too obscure for the king to expound. And she presented the king with a hundred and twenty talents of gold and great quantities of spices and precious stones; no such wealth of spices ever came again as those given to King Solomon by the Queen of Sheba.’*** |
| Jerusalem Bible: Kings 10.1-3.10) |
| Dalby, Andrew. *Dangerous Tastes: the Story of Spices*, p. 32 |

**SOURCE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS TRIBUTE VALUE**

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| **E.** At the birth of Jesus, the three magi brought gifts of symbolic tribute; they may have had medicinal value.  ***And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts: gold, and frankincense and myrrh.*** |
| Gospel of Matthew 2:11  King James Bible |
| http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/why-did-the-magi-bring-gold-frankincense-and-myrrh/ |

**RELIGIOUS BELIEF TRIBUTE VALUE**

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| **F.** An anonymous Latin poet describes the magical lifestyle of a phoenix on the imaginary island of Panchaea, thought to be the source of myrrh:  ***“She collects the spices and aromas that the Assyrian gathers, and the rich Arab; those that are harvested by the Pygmy peoples and by India, and that grow in the soft bosom of the Sabaean land. She***  ***collects cinnamon, the perfume of far-wasting amomum (cardamum), balsams mixed with tejpat leaves; there is also a slip of gentle cassia and gum arabic, and the rich teardrops of frankincense. She adds the tender spikes of downy nard and the power of Panchaea's myrrh.*** |
| Anonymous (Rome)  79-88 AD |
| Dalby, Andrew. *Dangerous Tastes: the Story of Spices*, p. 12 |

**SOURCE/ORIGIN LEGEND**

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| **G.** Widely interpreted lines from the Hebrew Bible, referring to God's love for Israel, and later by Christians as the love of Christ for the Church, this excerpt refers to myrrh and aloes:  ***“Yours are the rarest of spices:***  ***nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, and all the trees***  ***that bear incense;***  ***myrrh and aloes, and all the subtlest of aromas.”*** |
| "Song of Songs" |
| Dalby, Andrew. *Dangerous Tastes: the Story of Spices*, p. 107 |

**RELIGIOUS BELIEFS VALUE**

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| **H.** Spices came from the dangerous edges of the known world:  ***“One day, as we sailed rather far on along the African coast beyond Zanzibar, a place that is called the Mouth of the Ocean, we saw to our right a mass of birds in flight, called albatrosses, at least twice as big as kites. The air was bad there, too. We were all afraid, and the crew and the merchants who had experienced this before said that we were close to the Ocean. 'Turn back,' they said to the captain, 'or we shall be taken by the currents and fall towards the Ocean and we shall all be lost.' Where the Ocean meets the known sea it creates a monstrous wave, and there is an undertow from the sea towards the Ocean. We were terrified. Some of those birds called albatrosses flew with us a long way, high in the sky, as if to warn us that Ocean was still near.”*** |
| Cosmas Indicopleustes  Christian Topography 2.29 |
| Dalby, Andrew. *Dangerous Tastes: the Story of Spices*, p. 12 |

**LEGENDS SOURCES**

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| **H.** Cinnamon and cassia were highly-valued spices from South Asia that were transported by Arab traders along with other spices:  ***“The Arabians cover their bodies and faces, all but their eyes, with ox-hides and other skins before going out to collect cassia. It grows in a shallow lake. The lake and all the country round are infested by winged creatures like bats which screech horribly and are very fierce. They have to be kept from attacking the men's eyes while they are cutting the cassia.***  ***The process of collecting the cinnamon is even stranger. In what country it grows is quite unknown. The Arabians say that the dry sticks, which we call ‘kinamomon’, are brought to Arabia by large birds, which carry them to their nests, made of mud, on mountain precipices which no man can climb. The method invented to get the cinnamon sticks is this. People cut up the bodies of dead oxen into very large joints, and leave them on the ground near the nests. They then scatter, and the birds fly down and carry off the meat to their nests, which are too weak to bear the weight and fall to the ground. The men come and pick up the cinnamon. Acquired in this way, it is exported to other countries.*** |
| Herodotus, Greek historian  (c. 484 - 420 B.C.) |
| Dalby, Andrew. *Dangerous Tastes: the Story of Spices*, p. 37 |

**SOURCES/ORIGIN LEGENDS**

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| **I.** The Bible mentions the use of frankincense nearly fifty times. Here it describes the restoration of Jerusalem and includes mention of frankincense:  ***1 Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.***  ***2 For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.***  ***3 And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.***  ***4 Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip.***  ***5 Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exalt, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.***  ***6 A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the Lord.***  ***7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you; the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; they shall come up with acceptance on my altar, and I will beautify my beautiful house.*** |
| Isaiah 60:6 |
| http://www.esvbible.org/Isaiah+60%3A6/ |

**SOURCE/ORIGIN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS TRIBUTE VALUE**

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| **J.** According to Christian Bible, when Jesus was hanging on the cross, he was offered wine, mixed with myrrh, to drink.  ***"And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh, but he received it not."***  Mark 15:23 |
| Myrrh was also used to embalm the body of Jesus Christ after his death:  ***"And there came also to Nicodemus, which at first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred point weight."***  John 19:39 |
| "Frankincense and Myrrh", Arthur O. Tucker  *Economic Botany*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Oct. - Dec., 1986), pp. 425-433 |

**RELIGIOUS BELIEFS USES/RITUALS**

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| **K.** Frankincense is the supreme incense of antiquity and was mentioned more frequently in ancient texts than any other spice. This is a scene from a Greek myth when Apollonius approaches the king:  ***"And when Apollonius approached and saluted him, the king addressed him in the Greek language and invited him to sacrifice with him; and it chanced that he was on the point of sacrificing to the Sun as a victim a white horse of the true Nisaean breed, which he had adorned with trappings as if for a triumphal procession.***  ***But Apollonius replied: "Do, oh king, go on with your sacrifice, in your own way, but permit me to sacrifice in mine."***  ***And he took up a handful of frankincense and said: "O thou Sun, send me as far over the earth as is my pleasure and thine, and may I make the acquaintance of good men, but never hear anything of bad ones, nor they of me."***  ***And with these words he threw the frankincense into the fire and watched to see how the smoke of it curled upwards, and how it grew turbid, and in how many points it shot up; and in a manner he caught the meaning of the fire, and watched as it appeared of good omen and pure.***  ***Then he said: "Now, O king, go on with your sacrifice in accordance with your own traditions, for my traditions are such as you see."*** |
| *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* by Philostratus, Chapter 31,  translated by F. C. Conybeare, M.A. p.89 |
| http://www.hellenicgods.org/frankincense |

**RELIGIOUS BELIEFS TRIBUTE USES VALUE**

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| **L.** "The Father of History" Herodotus describes the burning of incense to the god Baal each year at Babylon:   |  | | --- | | ***"There is moreover in the temple at Babylon another cell below,***  ***wherein is a great image of Baal sitting, made of gold, and by it***  ***is placed a large table of gold, and his footstool and seat are of***  ***gold also; and, as the Chaldeans reported, the weight of the gold***  ***of which these things are made is eight hundred talents. Outside***  ***this cell is an altar of gold; and there is also another altar of great***  ***size, where full grown animals are sacrificed, whereas on the***  ***golden altar it is not lawful to sacrifice any but young sucklings***  ***only: and also on the larger altar the Chaldeans offer one thousand***  ***talents of frankincense every year at the time when they celebrate***  ***the feast in honor of this god ... This temple, then, is thus adorned***  ***with magnificence, and there are also many private votive-offerings."*** | |
| *Herodotus, Book I Clio: #183* |
| http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hh/hh1180.htm |

**RELIGIOUS BELIEFS TRIBUTE USES/RITUALS VALUE**

**Herodotus**  was a Greek historian known as the "father of history." He was born around 484 BC and wrote several records including *The Histories, Books I, II, and III.*

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| **M.** By the time of the Roman Empire, there was a great demand for spices.  ***“Those old tales were invented by the Arabians to raise the price of their goods. There is an accompanying story that under the reflected rays of the sun at midday an indescribable sort of collective odor is given off from the whole of the peninsula, which is due to the harmoniously blended exhalation of all those aromas, and that the first news of Arabia received by the fleets of Alexander the Great were these odors, wafted far out to sea.***  ***All these stories are nonsense. In fact cinnamomum, which is the same thing as cinnamum, grows in 'Ethiopia', which is linked by intermarriage with the Cave Dwellers. These buy it from their neighbors and bring it over vast seas on rafts which have no rudders to steer them, no oars to push them, no sails to propel them, indeed***  ***no motive power at all but man alone and his courage. What is more, they take to sea in winter, around the solstice, which is when the east winds blow the hardest. These winds drive them on the proper course across the bays. When they have rounded the Cape, a west, northwest wind will land them in the harbor called Ocilia, so that is the trading place they prefer. They say that their traders take almost five years there and back, and that many die. On the return journey they take glassware and bronze ware, clothing, brooches, bracelets and necklaces: so here is one more trade route that exists chiefly because women follow fashion.”*** |
| Pliny the Elder,  *Natural History* (23 - 79 A.D.) |
| Dalby, Andrew. *Dangerous Tastes: the Story of Spices*, p. 37 |

**SOURCES/ORIGINS VALUE**

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| **N.** Roman comedies made fun of the mania for spices at the time. Here, Leaena, an aged slave, praises her favorite wine  ***“My beauty of Bacchus! You're old, and so am I, and how I need***  ***you! Compared with you, every other essence is as bilge water! You are my myrrh, my cinnamon, my ointment of rose, my saffron, my cassia, my rarest of perfumes! Where you are poured, there would I fain be buried!”*** |
| Plautus, Playwright (c. 254 - 184 BCE) |
| Dalby, Andrew. *Dangerous Tastes: the Story of Spices.* |

**USES VALUE**

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| **O.** During the height of the Roman empire, some politicians believed there was a drain of coinage to South Asia that was unfortunate:  **“*And it will not be amiss to set out the whole of the voyage from Egypt, now that reliable knowledge of it is for the first time available. It is an important subject, since in no year does India absorb less than 55 million sesterces of our Empire's wealth, sending back merchandise to be sold to us at a hundred times its prime cost.”***  ***“At the smallest reckoning 100 million sesterces is the sum which every year India, the silk-growing country of northern China, and the Arabian Peninsula take from our Empire. Such is the cost to us of our exquisites and our women.”*** |
| Pliny the Elder, (23 - 79 A.D.)  *Book VI* |
| Loane, Helen Jefferson. “Vespasian’s Spice Market and Tribute in Kind.” *Classical Philology*, 1994: 10-21.  Dalby, Andrew. *Dangerous Tastes: the Story of Spices*. p. 124. |

**SOURCE/ORIGIN USES VALUE**

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| **P.** Frankincense was of special importance in religious rituals, but it was also used for funerals and cremations in ancient Rome to disguise odors. The Romans began to use frankincense increasing for this purpose. Again, Pliny regrets the cost:  **"*(Arabia's) good fortune has been caused by the luxury of mankind even in the hours of death when they burn over the departed the products which they had originally understood to have been created for the gods. Good authorities declare that Arabia does not produce so large a quantity of perfume in a year's output as was burned by the Emperor Nero in a day at the obsequies of his consort Poppaea. Then reckon up the vast number of funerals celebrated yearly throughout the entire world, and the perfumes such as are given to the gods a grain at a time, that are piled up in heaps to honor the dead bodies!"*** |
| *Book VI,* Pliny the Elder, (23 - 79 A.D.) |
| Groom, Nigel*, Frankincense and Myrrh: A Study of the Arabian Incense Trade.* Librairie du  Liban: Longman, London and New York, 1981. |

**SOURCE/ORIGIN USES/RITUALS VALUE**

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| **Q.** This is a prayer to St. Nicholas, who was the Archbishop of Myra (now Turkey).  Regarded as a miracle worker, he was associated with the use of myrrh for healing.  ***"With divine myrrh the divine grace of the Spirit anointed thee, who didst preside as a leader of Myra, and having made the ends of the world fragrant with the myrrh of virtues thou holiest of men, through the pleasant breathings of thy intercessions always driving away the evil stench of passions. Therefore in great faith, we render thee great praise, and celebrate thy all-holy memory, O Nicholas..."*** |
| Anonymous |
| http://www.itmonline.org/arts/myrrh.htm |

**RELIGIOUS BELIEFS TRIBUTE USES**

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| **R.** Other spices of great value were traded in ancient times. On India’s Malabar Coast, ancient Nelkynda near the entrepot of Muziris was described this way:  ***“Bales of pepper are brought to market from each house, and gold received in exchange from the Roman ships is brought to shore in sackfuls, at Muciri, where the music of the singing sea never ceases and where King Kudduvar loads his guests with the ambergris of the sea and the cardamom of the mountains.”*** |
| A Tamil poet , 2nd Century, AD |
| Dalby, Andrew. *Dangerous Tastes: the Story of Spices*. p. 93. |

SOURCES VALUE

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| **S.** As far away as China, there was knowledge of the spices available on the Arabian peninsula which were highly desired. Here is a Chinese sailor’s description of the sea route to the Mediterranean (Ta-ts'in was the Chinese word for "Rome"):  "***The sea is vast and great; with favorable winds it is possible to cross within three months; but if you meet slow winds, it may also take you two years. It is for this reason that those who go to sea take on board a supply of three years' provisions. There is something in the sea which is apt to make a man homesick, and several have thus lost their lives."***  Kan Ying, Chinese ambassador (97 A.D.)  Below a Chinese description of the people in Syria:    ***“They (the people of Ta-ts'in which is also called Li-kan) traffic by sea with An-hsi and T'ien-chu, the profit is ten-fold. They are honest in their transactions and there are no double prices. The budget is based on a well-filled treasury.”***  Chinese official: *The Annals* *of the Eastern Han*  Later Han (25 - 220 AD) |
| Miller, J. Innes. *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire*. p. 134 |

**SOURCE/ORIGIN VALUE**

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| **T.** Pliny the Elder called frankincense "a treasure of Arabia"  ***"The chief productions of Arabia are frankincense and myrrh, which last it bears in common with the country of the Troglodytæ. There is no country in the world that produces frankincense except Arabia, and, indeed, not the whole of that. Almost in the very centre of that region ... is the incense-bearing region, known by the name of Saba. The Greeks say that the word signifies a "secret mystery." This district looks towards the northeast and is inaccessible by rocks on every side, while it is bounded on the right by the sea, from which it***  ***is shut out by cliffs of tremendous height... The Minæi were the first people who carried on any traffic in frankincense, which they still do to a greater extent than any other persons... and no other people among the Arabians, behold the incense tree; and, indeed, not all of them, for it is said that there are not more than three thousand families which have a right to claim that privilege, by virtue of hereditary succession; and that for this reason those persons are called sacred, and are not allowed, while pruning the trees or gathering the harvest, to receive any pollution, either by intercourse with women, or coming in contact with the dead; by these religious observances it is that the price of the commodity is so considerably enhanced. Some persons, however, say, that the right of gathering incense in the forests belongs to all these people in common, while others again state, that they take their turns year by year."*** |
| Pliny, the Elder, *The Country of Incense, Book XII, Chapter xxx* |
| (http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/Silk-Road/ss/31114-Pliny-the-Elder-on-Frankincense.htm |

**SOURCE/ORIGIN VALUE**

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| **U.** In this account, the Roman geographer Strabo, describes customs related to the production of frankincense as well as its use:  ***"According to another partition of the country, the whole of Arabia Felix is divided into five kingdoms (or portions), one of which comprises the fighting men, who fight for all the rest; another contains the husbandmen, by whom the rest are supplied with food; another includes those who work at mechanical trades. One division comprises the myrrh region; another the frankincense region, although the same tracts produce cassia, cinnamon, and nard. Trades are not changed from one family to another, but each workman continues to exercise that of his father."***  ***"Some merchandise is altogether imported into the country, others are not altogether imports, especially as some articles are native products, such as gold and silver, and many of the aromatics... They worship the sun, and construct the altar on the top of a house, pouring out libations and burning frankincense upon it every day."*** |
| Strabo, *Book of Geography* |
| http://rbedrosian.com/Classic/strabo16e.htm  http://www.nabataea.net/hagar.html |

**SOURCE/ORIGINS VALUE**

**Strabo**  was a Greek historian, born in 63 BC. His collection of 17 books called *Geography*, give an excellent glimpse into life during the Roman Empire.