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Cinnamomum

Lauraceae

Cinnamomum is derived from Hebrew *kinamon* and classical Greek *kinnamomum* names for cinnamon.

Historians continue to debate the accuracy of the use of the references to cinnamon

(*Cinnamomum verum*) and cassia (*Cinnamomum aromaticum*) in early records.

Apparently these are confusing. In fairness to the very early traders and ‘specialists’ the smell of the roots, stems and leaves of some of the species in the genus are understood to be similar and their identification would have been further complicated at their destination for centuries by the fact that they would have been quite stale (with similar appearance, changed colour and loss of scent and taste) by the time they arrived at there journey’s end – even if they were fresh when they started out. (When fresh, cassia bark is coarser than that of cinnamon.) Quite a lot of the modern detective work hinges on the names in common use for the commodities in different places and their linguistic derivations. It seems that Mediterranean traders were familiar with the Phoenician words, cassia and cinnamon. Cassia made its way to Mediterranean countries via the Phoenician traders and the overland caravans from the Orient where it is native. Cinnamon is alleged in some records to have come up to ancient Egypt from tropical Africa (via the Red Sea) where it is not native.

On the other hand species of *Cinnamomum* are native in India – BUT... The Aryans were establishing themselves in northern India at about the time when the Hebrews were quitting their Egyptian overlords and roaming in the desert ie. about 1200 BC. The Indian settlers called their local *Cinnamomum* barks (which did not include the true cinnamon, *Cinnamomum verum*) by names alien to those familiar in the Mediterranean region, and although they established trade overland with Babylon there appears to be no evidence that the commodities included the Indian barks at that time. Around 300 BC the Aryans, using water transport, started to establish trade on the southern coasts of India and true cinnamon, that is native to south-western India, was absorbed into the commercial growth of the region and was destined to continue so for hundreds of years. Even in 1500 Ceylon was sending all her export supplies of cinnamon to Calicut for the Indian merchants there to trade on. It is likely to have been from this region that true cinnamon entered the Persian trade routes.