

Armenian Scented Paper (*Papier D'Armenie*)

From Incense to Commodity

This display exhibit shows the history of incense and invention of producing a pleasant smelling paper that burns without flame (after the flame is blown out), deodorizing and sanitizing the habitat. Other aroma producing media (sticks, heated oil, etc.) and burning methods (smudging, heating, etc.) are not included in the scope of this exhibit.

Note:

- red frame signifies rare or important items.
- blue font presents tree or plant scientific name.

1. History of Incense

Plan

1. A History of Incense

- 1.1 - What is incense and how it is obtained.
- 1.2 - Where does it come from (trees & plants).
- 1.3 - Geography of Incense
- 1.4 - Supply Routes

2. Application of Incense

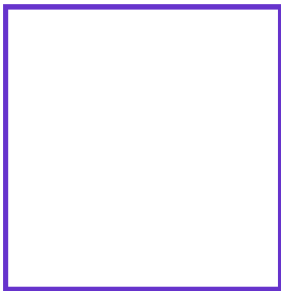
- 2.1 - Religious
- 2.2 - Entertainment
- 2.3 - Pragmatic and Medicinal

3. Papier D'Armenie

- 3.1 - Discovery and Making It a Commodity
- 3.2 - Advertising and Marketing
- 3.3 - The Modern Product

1.1 - What is Incense and How It Is Obtained.

The word incense derives from Latin *incendere* which means “to burn”. So what is an incense? It is a gum/resin, that is obtained by tapping incense trees by slashing or stripping the bark and allowing the exuded resin to bleed out and harden. It is later burned for the sweet smell it produces.



Incense



Stripping

Slashing. Error stamp (double printed value & country name in red.)
Seen only once in ten years



1.2 - Where does it come from.

The aromatic resin comes from gum/resin trees mainly of *Burseraceae* Family, which includes *Boswellia* (Frankincense trees) and *Commiphora* (Myrrh trees), among others.

Boswellia carteri (*sacra*)
Frankincense

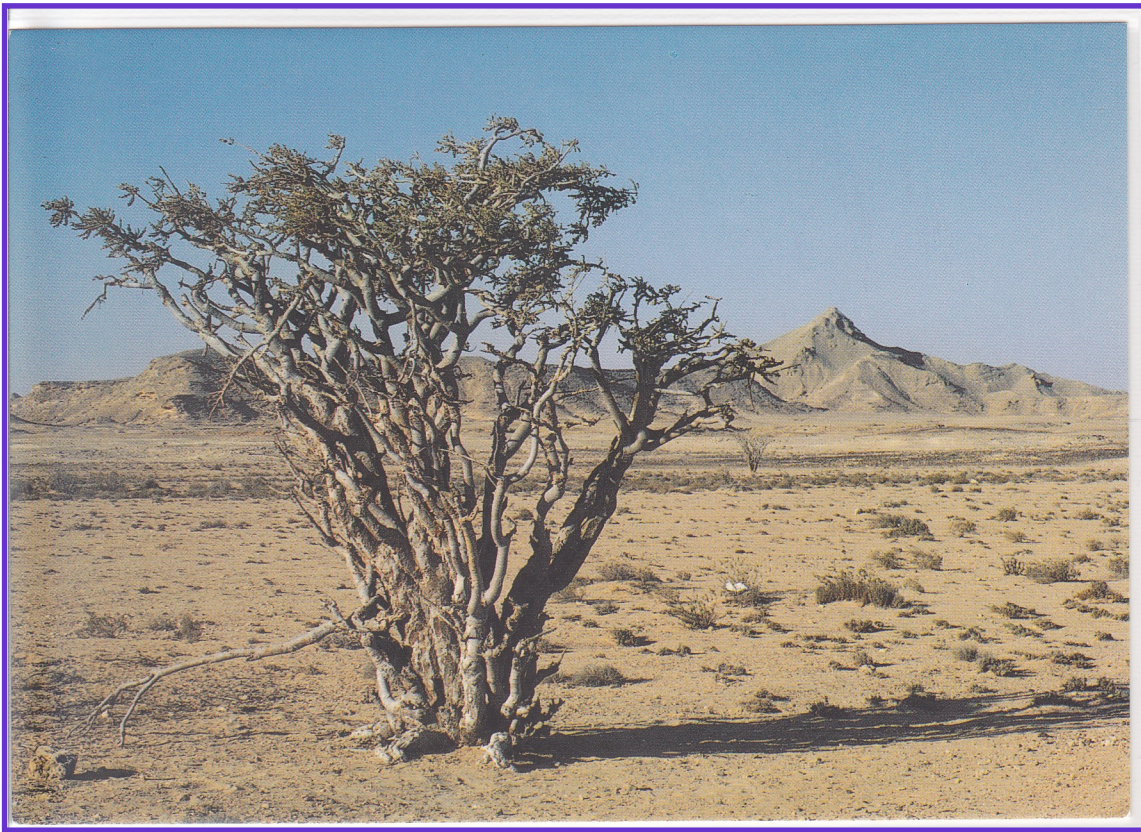


Commiphora wildii
Wild's cork wood



1. History of Incense

1.2 Where Does it Come From



Frankincense Tree. Picture postcard produced by Family Bookshop Oman, LLC, printed by Vontobel, Switzerland..

Commiphora sp.
Full color proof



Benzoin angustifolium
Gum Tree



Styrax benzoin
Gum Benjamin Tree

To give it more pleasant aroma spices (flowers and bushes) were used, such as:



Vanilla planifolia
Vanilla



Santalum album
Sandalwood Tree



1. History of Incense

1.2 Where Does it Come From

1.3 - Geography of Incense

Originally, incense was imported from Africa and South Arabian Peninsula.



Ethiopia.



Somalia

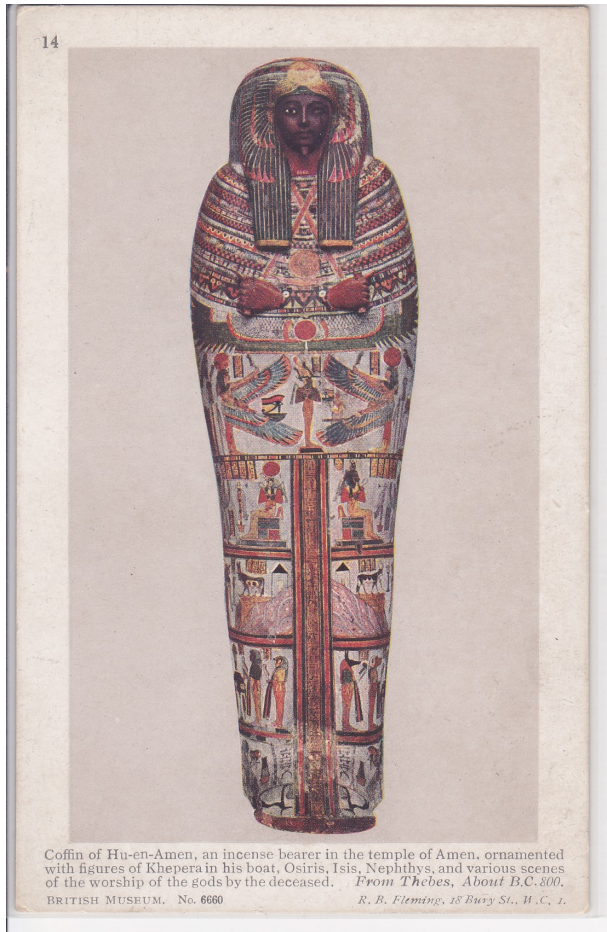


Tunisia.

Oman. Phone card issued by General Telecommunications Organization, Ministry of Post, Telegraph & Telephones, Sultanate of Oman



Egypt



British Museum undivided back picture postcard No. 6660, ed. R. B Fleming, written in 1926.

Resin balls were found in many tombs of ancient Egypt (dated to 3100 BC). They were presented to the gods and pharaohs. Even special incense bearers were appointed in the temples.



Ramses II offering incense to Onuris.

Babylon



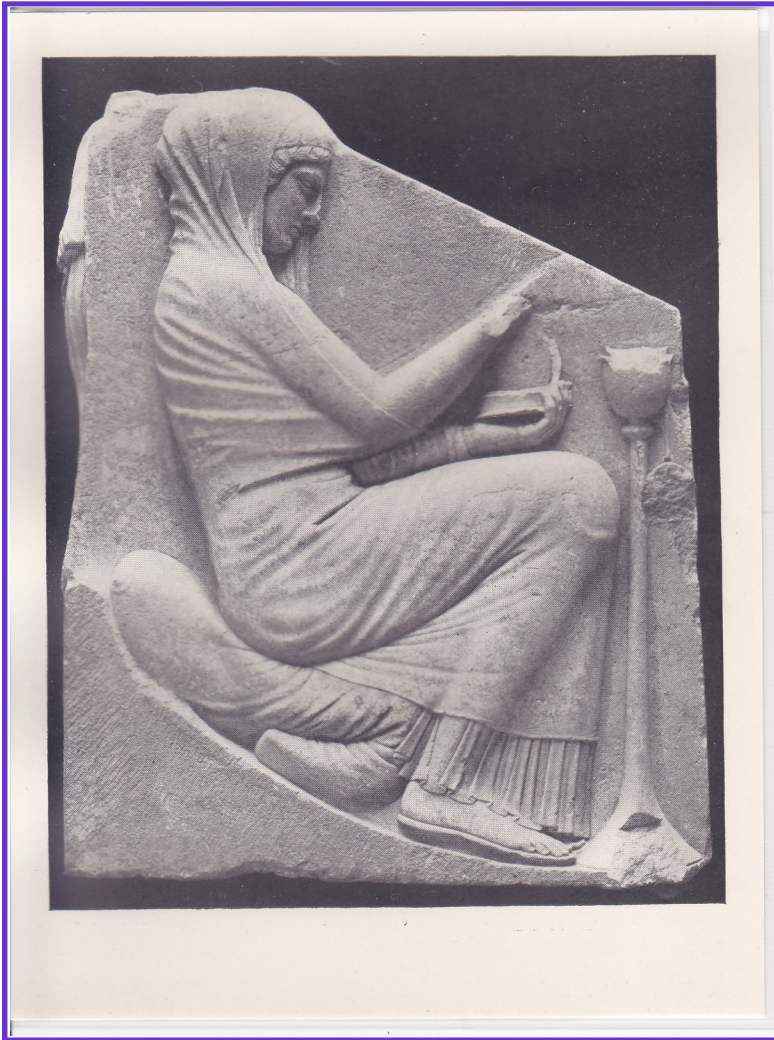
Babylonians burnt incense while praying to divining oracles.

1. History of Incense

1.3 The Geography of Incense

From Babylon the incense burning custom spread to :

Greece ...



1929 halftone print of a bas relief sculpture of a Crouched Greek Woman Offering Incense (Ludovisi Throne).

...and Rome...

Julia Domna, AR Denarius, 196-211, Rome. Reverse: pietas, veiled, standing left, dropping incense on lit altar.

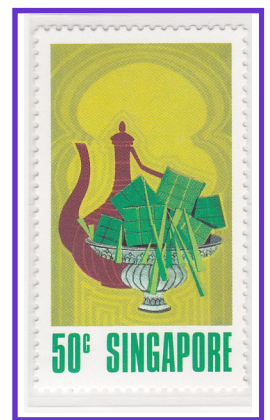


Right - enlarged reverse of the coin (fragment).

...Persia...



...Indochina...



...Korea.

In the 6th century Korean Buddhist monks introduced incense to Japan.



A Korean monk.

...China...



...Japan.



1. History of Incense

1.4 - Supply Routes

Most of the frankincense production was coming from Somalia and Southern Arabia. India, Indonesia and China later became incense producing countries. With time, supply routes were developed to transport the precious commodity.



Incense was so precious that Egyptians carried the trees on foot from the South to plant them next to their temples.



Poster stamp showing a camel caravan passing through the desert.

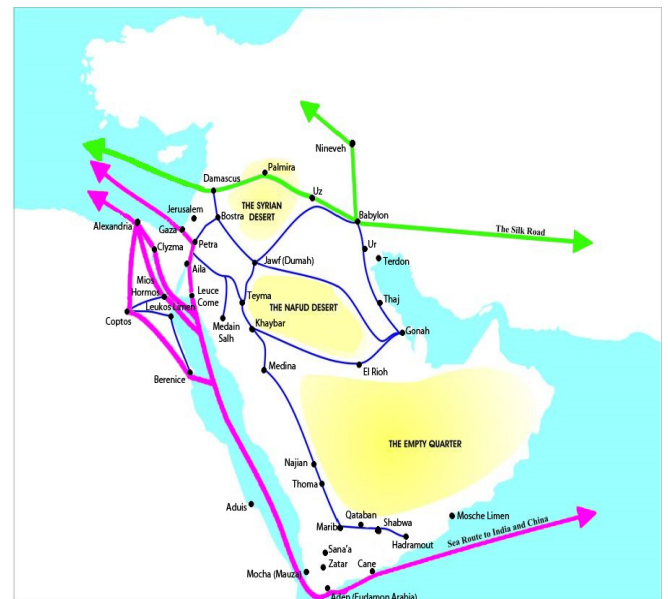


Map of Arabian Peninsula.

The diagram on the left of the stamp below shows Incense Route as it passed through Israel. Part of this ancient network (approximately 65 km) from Moah to Avdat was declared a World Heritage Site.



The Silk Road became a primary land route from Indo-China into West Asia, North Africa and Europe.



The Sea Route traversed the Indian Ocean to the South of the Arabian Peninsula, and then through the Red Sea into Egypt and other Mediterranean ports.

Through the African deserts the incense was transported on camels.

Phoenicians and Greeks, then Romans and Indians, were highly involved in the incense trade by sea route.



Phoenician ship



Roman ship



Greek ship



Indian ship

2 - Application of Incense

2.1 - Religious

In Judaism

Exodus 30:1 - *“and thou shalt make an altar to burn incense...”*



Incense altar.

In Christianity

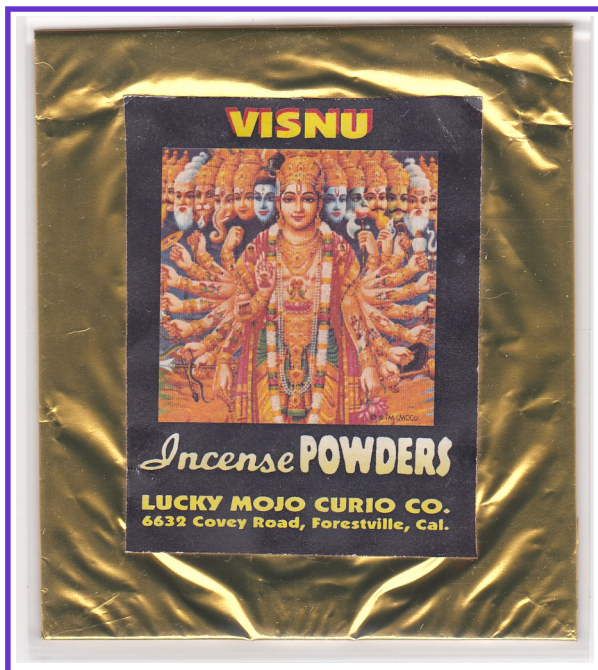
Revelation 8:4 - *“and the smoke of the incense rose into the presence of God from the angel’s hand...”*



Censer with burning incense.

In Hindu

Tait. Up: 2.3 - *“The gods live on breath, also men and animals”* Environment of sweet fragrance and aroma helps higher and ethereal beings to roam should one call them.



Vishnu, the multi-incarnated Preserver of the Universe. Powder incense packaging.



Embossed divided back picture postcard mailed 1910.
Colored lithograph, Publisher - E. Nash & Co.

In Islam

Although not used during worship, incense is used to remind of the rewards of righteous believers in Paradise: *“The aloes-wood will be used in their censers”*.



Censer with crescent on top.

2.2 - Entertainment

In Japan incense burning became source of amusement and entertainment with nobles.



Kōdō (the way of incense), kumikō and genjikō - three classical arts of refinement and activities.



Incense Party.
Divided back picture postcard. Japan, 1950. Publisher - Shinsui ITO.

A samurai warrior might perfume his helmet and armor with incense to achieve aura of invincibility.



Samurai helmet & armor

In Turkey incense burning was part of everyday life in sultan's harem. "Odalisca" (Turkish "odalik") means a chambermaid (a slave girl).



Odalisca & Burning Incense,
Advertising card, mailed in 1927. Colored lithograph. Published by Richter & Co., Naples.

2 - Application of Incense

2.3 - Pragmatic/Medical

The father of medicine, Hippocrates (460-377 B.C.), is believed to be the first person to establish and set down a scientific system of medicine, where the use of aromas through incense played a significant role.



Hippocrates



Avicenna (Ibn Sina)



Petrov Tumor Research Institute.

Legend says that Hippocrates freed Athens from plague by burning aromatic plants throughout the city, as well as burning the bodies of the dead.

The early Persian physician Avicenna documented using frankincense for ulcers, tumors, fevers, dysentery and vomiting.

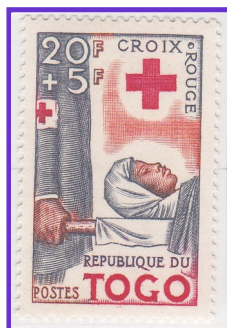


Victorian fever medicine advertising trade card , circa 1880s.

In Ayurvedic practice, frankincense has been used in internal medicine, trauma care and dermatology.

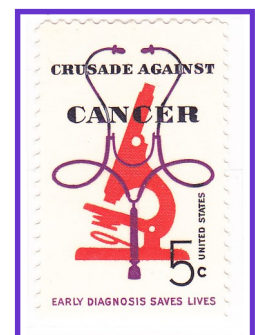


Institute of Ayurveda



Trauma Care

In Europe today, the essential oil and resin are being studied and used in clinical applications that are shedding new light on possible cancer treatments.



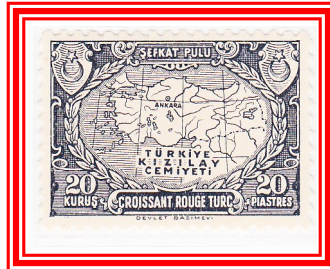
Crusade Against Cancer

3. Papier D'Armenie

3.1 - Discovery and Making a Commodity

It is yet to be determined when the incense began to be used by the Armenians. One thing is certain - it found its place in pre-Christian times and later in the Armenian church rites, in medical profession, and in the houses of common people. This fragrant gum resin, or benzoin, obtained from various plants, has been known for its purifying qualities.

Auguste Ponsot, a Frenchman visiting Ottoman domains, was particularly impressed with the practice of burning gum resin in Armenian homes.



Map of the Ottoman domains (ancient Armenian territories). Red Crescent Society Charity stamp and error stamp - red crescent omitted.

Upon his return to France he collaborated with his pharmacist friend Henri Rivière to make the practice a commodity.



Poster stamp for the 2nd Pharmaceutical Exhibition. Prague, 1896.



Alcohol advertizing card with attached reply card mailed to Omaha, Nebraska, 1922.

The only missing part was the supporting medium., The blotting paper (as in ink blotter) was found to absorb the mixture while retaining the original fragrance of the benzoin resin, and smolder slowly with no flame, after the flame was blown out..

Victorian perfumed blotter advertisement card. H Rebscher perfumer of Rochester, NY, circa 1900s.



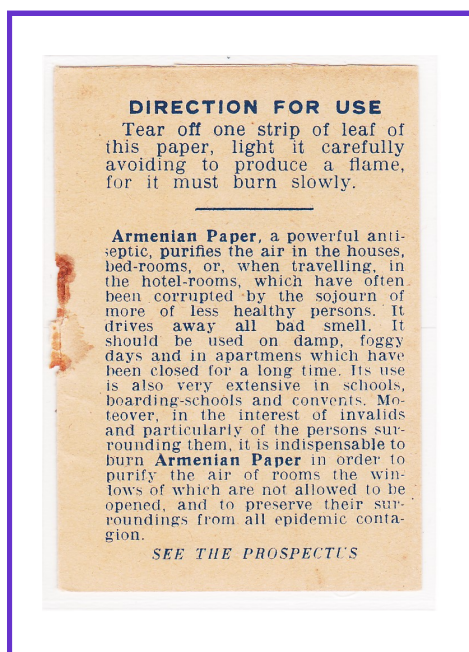
3 - Papier D'Armenie

3.1 - Discovery and Making a Commodity

The 'alchemy' inherent in the Papier D'Armenie proved to be a huge success with the emerging importance of hygiene, winning medals at the Health Exhibition of 1888, and the Universal Exhibition of 1889 (both in Paris).



A strip from the booklet. Booklet consisted of 10 pages with 3 strips on each page.



Directions for use were printed inside the booklet in French, English, German and Spanish.



Two covers (front and back) of the Papier D'Armenie booklet showing images of the corresponding gold medals won at that exhibitions and advertising its benefits—hygiene and sanitation.



3.2 - Advertising and Marketing



A page from 1900 Almanach Hachette with Papier d'Armenie advertising and samples of the paper.

3 - Papier D'Armenie

3.2 - Advertising and Marketing

"Marketing for Papier d'Armenie presented the product as the heroic vanquisher of maladies" (Samuel Dolbee of New York University)



Advertising page showing Paris address of Mr. Ponsot's company.



Divided back picture postcard, illustrator A. Van Geneyn, printed by J. Bognard in 1900. Original poster was 129.5 x 94 cm



Page from 1900 Almanac Hachette with Papier D'Armenie advertising and samples of the paper.

3 - Papier D'Armenie

3.2 - Advertising and Marketing



Papier d'Armenie was presented during 1889 exhibition in Paris.

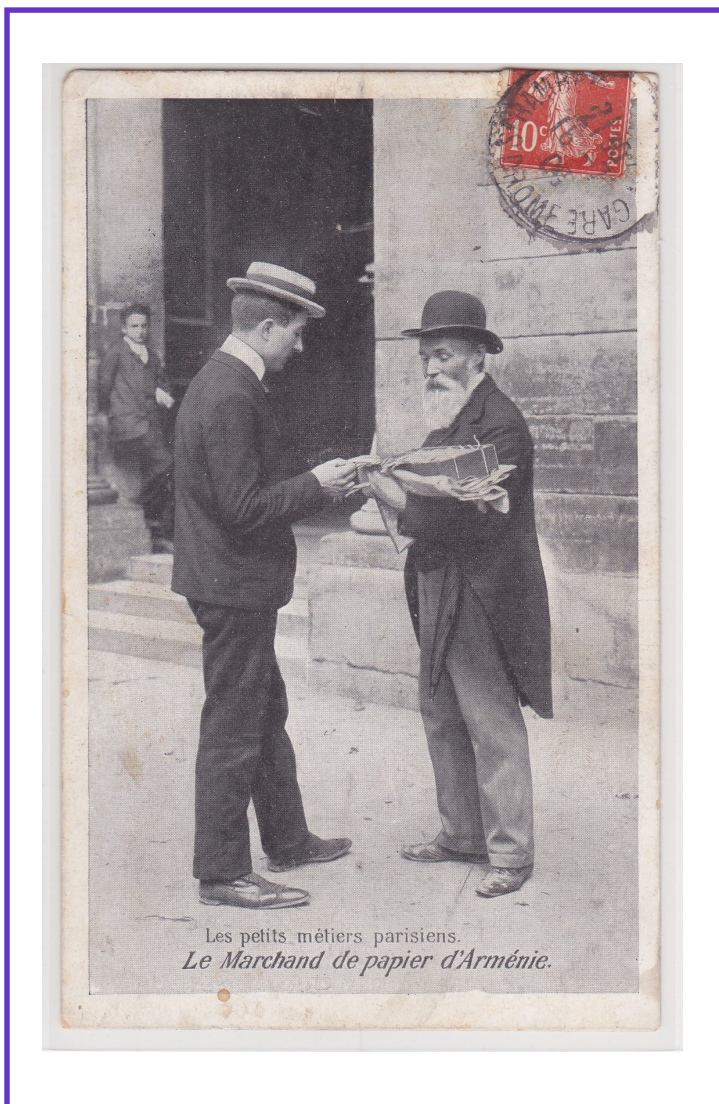
Certain of the effectiveness and the antiseptic properties of the paper, the two inventors placed two pieces of meat under two dish covers. They burnt Papier D'Armenie in one of them. After a week, the meat that had "breathed in" the fragrance from the paper was still edible, while the other was tainted.

Poster stamps depicting one dish with a cover and another without it.

Entry ticket to 1889 Exposition Universelle, seen only once.



Very quickly the product gained popularity. Picture postcards below show sellers of the product in the streets of French cities.



Divided back picture postcard, 1909. Photo lithograph. Publisher - H.Laas, E.Pécaud & Co., Paris.



Undivided back picture postcard 1903. Lithograph. Artist - Pous Thomis, publisher - Royer Nancy.

3 - Papier D'Armenie

3.2 - Advertising and Marketing

Advertising billboards were placed on building walls all around France.



Right: Essomes. Advertising on the center building's wall. Divided back picture postcard written but no evidence of mailing. Photolithograph. Editor - ND Phot (Brothers Etienne and Louis-Antonin Neurdein), Paris.. Circa 1906-1910.



Below: Rambervillers. Advertising on the left building's wall. Divided back picture postcard mailed in 1905. Photolithograph. Editor - E. Rivot, Rambervillers.

Above: Bessines. Advertising on the right building's wall. Divided back picture postcard mailed in 1908. Photolithograph. Printer - C/T (possibly Curt Teich), Series L, as no other reference was found during intensive research.



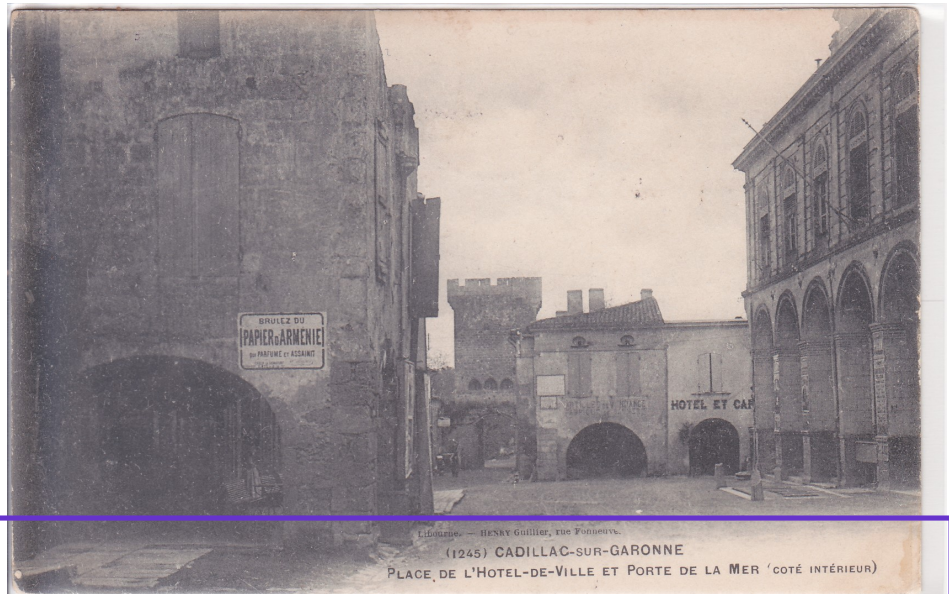
3 - Papier D'Armenie

3.2 - Advertising and Marketing

Cadillac-sur-Garonne. Bill-board with advertising to the right of the arch. *Divided back picture postcard mailed 1904. Photolithograph. Publisher - Libourne-Henry Guillier, rue Fonneuve.*



City of Auvergne.



Auvergne. Advertising on the right building's wall. *Undivided back picture postcard mailed in 1904. Photolithograph. Publisher - P. Juliot, Clermont-Ferrand - G. Delaunay, Succ.*

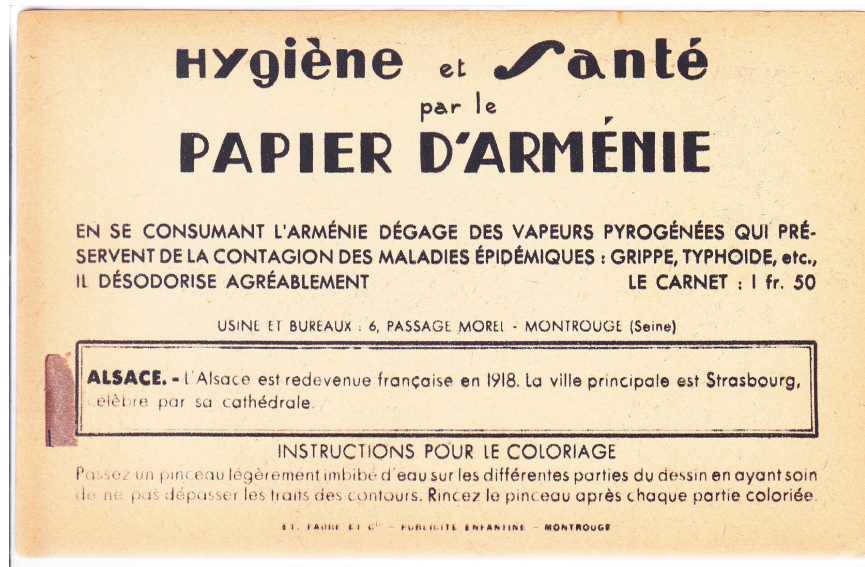


Châteaugiron. Advertising on the right building's wall. *Undivided back picture postcard mailed in 1910. Photolithograph. Editor - F. Mary-Roussellier, Rennes.*

3 - Papier D'Armenie

3.2 - Advertising and Marketing

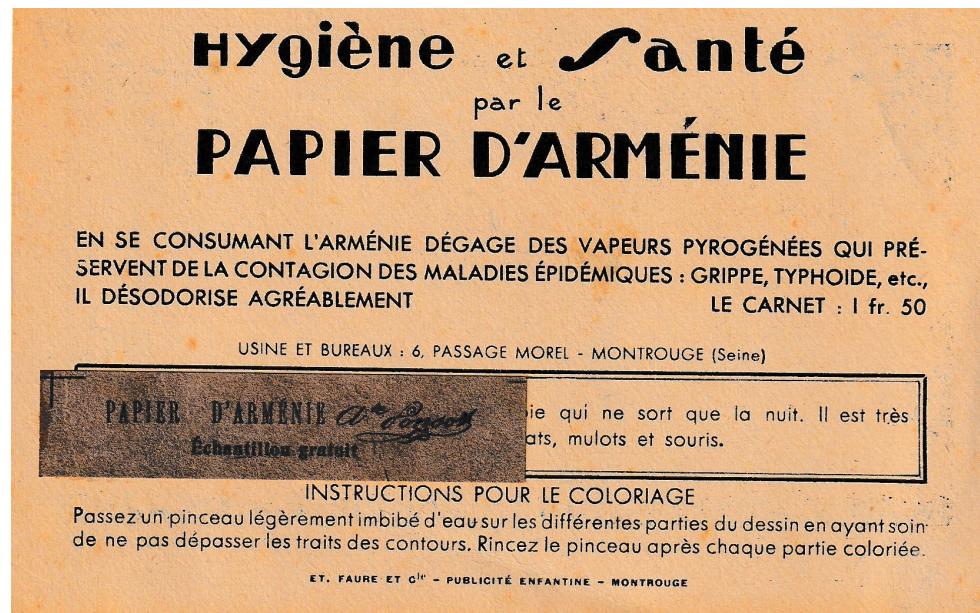
Advertisements were printed everywhere and on anything, even on coloring paper book for children.



Children coloring with brushes



Original back pages of the coloring paper book showing Montrouge address of the company and instructions on how to color.



3.3 - The Modern Product

Under the name of Carta D'Armenia this product is also produced in Italy. The smell of this Carta D'Armenia has very soupy aroma, and is not very popular.



3 - Papier D'Armenie

3.3 - The Modern Product

For the year of Armenia in France in 2006, Francis Kurkdjian of the Maison Francis Kurkdjian composed a fragrance for the Rivière Papier D'Armenie company. The aromas of incense and myrrh fit well with the woody and vanilla notes.



Modern aromas of the Papier d'Armenie include *La Rose* ...



Rose.

...and *The Triple* with pure vanilla aroma.



Vanilla.



On the market since 1885, the famed **ARMENIAN SCENTED PAPER** is one of the very few "survivors" (and most certainly the oldest) of the deodorizing and sanitizing papers that were once widely spread and sold, as papers that burned without flame.