

Oil: Kerosine, Asfalt & Alcohol

Oil(fossil fuel)

In the 8th century AH (15th century CE) oil was widely available in Islamic cultures. Oil was sourced out of shallow wells from the Middle East and traded via large caravans, to Timbuktu (Mali, Africa) and Al-Andalusia (Spain, Europe) in the West to Xi'an (China), Delhi (India) and Jakarta (Indonesia) in the East. Although the use of Oil was established thousands of years before the coming of Islam, it was Muslims who created the science and technology to process oil like we do today. Oil products like asphalt, lamp-oil and kerosene were being produced and used since the 2nd century AH (8th century CE). Muslims referred to oil as Naft, a term that later became naphtha in Europe and is still used to describe (fossil fuel) oil.

Asphalt

The oldest modern roads were built in the 2nd and 3rd century AH (8th and 9th century CE) in Bagdad(Iraq). Naft and tar were heated in large ceramic or metal bowls. These were later mixed with sand and gravel. These heavy oil/gravel mixtures were then laid out to dry and harden. Now, almost 1200 years later the majority of all roads being built in the world are being built the way Muslims used to in the Middle East.

Kerosene

A clear and light form of fossil fuel oil that almost never occurs naturally. Muslim in the 1st and 2nd century AH (7th and 8th century CE) were able to make kerosene by heating bitumen (heavy, hardened oil in rock). The "water" that came out of this oily rock was kerosene. A clear burning and valuable chemical compound. Later on kerosene was made by cooking regular oil and condensing the vapor. This process was called distillation. Thicker kinds of oil were used as lubricant in mechanics, waterproofing in shipbuilding and as a cementing agent in asphalt. Lighter oil compounds were used as lamp-oil, medicine and weapons of war. Kerosene and lamp-oil were considered valuable commodities in Islamic culture. Hospitals (bimartistans), pharmacies, schools, military outposts, traders and public services could now function at night. It made the Ummah safer and more productive. Kerosene has been used to fuel aviation aircrafts for the last 100 years. The system of distillation is an irreplaceable tool in every branch of chemistry. Most notably to make oil products like gasoline and diesel.

Alcohol

Known as beer, wine and "strong drink" in antiquity. Alcohol is a natural substance that is created when sweet (sugary crops & fruits) rot. Alcohol is nothing more than the "urine/excrement" from certain types of fungi (yeast). Beer and wine is made by a process called fermentation, a pretty word that means nothing else then rotting. At a certain point the fungi (yeast) die in their own urine (alcohol). Alcohol content cannot occur naturally above 16%. The pure form of alcohol was discovered by Mohammad-e Zakaria-ye al-Razi (239-319 AH or 854-932 CE) by means of distillation. The alcohol he produced was 100%. He called his discovery "al-kuhl". This technology was later transferred to Europe and the rest of the world which used it to make "stronger drinks". Alcohol consumption is forbidden in Islam because of its intoxicating effect and many bad habits associated with it. Still, alcohol was/is used in the entire Islamic world for medical and chemical purposes. The word intoxicating in Arabic is al-khamr or sukkar. Sukkar later became sugar in Europe. Sukkar itself is derived from "sarkara" from the Sanskrit language (India).

