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**Energy Markets as Social Spaces: Companies, Consumers  
and the Creation of a Kerosene Oil Market in South Asia, c. 1880-1940**

This paper studies the creation and trajectory of the market for kerosene oil in South Asia between the late 19th and early 20th century. It looks at the operations of several oil companies such as *Burmah Oil Company* (now BP) and *Asiatic Petroleum Company* (now Royal Dutch-Shell) in their endeavour to sell specific products to consumers with upper and middle class or lower middle class and poor backgrounds. This included price fixing between different companies and a differential price policy for higher and lower grade products, and different ways of advertisement to lure potential customers. Formal advertisements through text and image in media and public places were important. But to create and widen the market especially in the countryside, oil companies also used a wide network of distributing agents and novel marketing strategies. Kerosene cess tours in the countryside with loudspeakers and a motor van to attract the attention of potential customers were among these. Based on this evidence, the paper then argues that the oppositional pair between multi-national and Indian company and their different strategies in addressing different market elements does not hold for the example of oil companies in South Asia. These MNCs had to and did adapt their marketing strategies to local circumstances circumscribed by the product type and its potential consumer base.