WHY CARE ABOUT THE HISTORY OF OIL AND GAS?
A THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

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Despite a large number of works published on the history of petroleum, many aspects and many regions relevant to the history of petroleum still remain little researched. This problem is even more aggravated in the absence of well-funded academic research programs in this field. However, the significance of the history of petroleum science and technology stems from some fundamental necessities and characteristics that should not be neglected. The history helps us to preserve, celebrate, and learn from our “heritage” through: (1) “recording” the events, careers, developments and challenges in the field of petroleum exploration and production; (2) “recognizing” the major players in the progress of the field as a way to encourage the future generations; (3) “researching” the past to learn from its successes and failures in order to better plan for the future, and also to improve the historical record in the face of new evidence. To these, one more important factor should also be added because of the nature of petroleum: The history of petroleum is an “integrative” field on various levels: (1) It combines several key sciences including geology, chemistry and geophysics; (2) it depicts the vital pathways from academic disciplines to technology and vice versa; and (3) it is a narrative of both natural and human histories, showing interactions between earth resources and the economy and politics of social systems that have shaped history. Historical knowledge and investigations on the petroleum industry also have practical implications; they reveal (1) ignored exploration concepts, interpretations and practices; (2) forgotten field observations, seeps and records; (3) mechanisms and consequences of contracts, partnerships and business decisions; (4) abandoned wells and fields; (5) fixing environmental issues related to the oil industry. Outside the oil industry, the history of petroleum contributes to our understanding of (1) the growth of science and technology especially in the twentieth century; (2) geopolitical his-