

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF CHEMISTRY

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The word chemistry originated from the term, chemi or kima, the name of Egypt in Egyptian. The time period for the history of chemistry covers from ancient history of chemistry to the present. In earliest civilizations, fire was accepted as a mystical force and the controlled use fire in their familiar regular practices like cooking, lighting, making of earthen and glass wares, medicines, wines, metallurgy, armours, etc. eventually resulted in the development of various branches of chemistry in the later period. The basic chemical hypothesis was first propounded by Aristotle with his theory of four fundamental elements, fire, earth, water and air, from which everything was formed as a combination. In medieval alchemy around 300 B. C., the arts of alchemy being intermingled with magic and occultism proliferated into natural science with the goal of transmuting cheap metals into precious gold with 'Philosopher's Stone' and of chemical concoction, 'The Elixir of Life', for a longer and cured life. In seventeenth century, Robert Boyle was the first to make a clear differentiation between alchemy and scientific experimental approach towards matter initiating the trend of the history of modern chemistry. The pioneering contributions of Antoine Lavoisier and Jons Berzelius established the subject of chemistry on proper experimental and theoretical footings of chemical science. In the later period, with important discoveries and rapid advancement in research and technologies, in general, the subject of chemistry has been expanded into different broad groups as well as in cross-disciplinary and specialized fields of chemical science depending on the type and kind of matter being investigated. Chemistry is now a major branch of physical science.

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