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# FUNDAMENTALS OF ADSORPTION

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON FUNDAMENTALS OF ADSORPTION  
KYOTO, MAY 17-22, 1992**

Edited by

Motoyuki Suzuki

Professor, University of Tokyo

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## Editor's Biography



MOTOYUKI SUZUKI is Professor of Environmental Chemical Engineering at the Institute of Industrial Science, University of Tokyo. Born in Tokyo on February 7, 1941, he graduated from the Department of Chemical Engineering, University of Tokyo in 1963 and continued graduate studies there, finishing his doctorate in 1968. his dissertation entitled, "Transfer Processes in Solid Packed Beds" was conducted under the direction of Professor Daizo Kunii. Professor Suzuki spent two years (1969-1971) working with Professor J. M. Smith in the University of California, Davis, where he worked on chromatographic determination of rate parameters related to adsorption. After returning to Japan, he started his laboratory at the Institute of Industrial Science, University of Tokyo. In the meantime, he worked for seven years with Professor Kunitaro Kawazoe, one of the founders of adsorption research in Japan in the field of adsorption kinetics and regeneration of spent activated carbon. He also began working in environmental studies on water treatment by adsorption.

Dr. Suzuki received an award from the Society of Chemical Engineers, Japan for a Distinguished Paper in 1977, "Surface Diffusion of Volatile Organic s on Activated Carbons during Aqueous Phase Adsorption," and a Memorial Paper Award from the Industrial Water Association in 1979. He was given the Doctorem Honoris Causa from Veszprem University, Hungary in 1991 and was appointed Advisory Professor at Tongji University, Shanghai, China in 1992.

His publications total 130 reviewed papers plus 50 invited papers. he is the author of *Adsorption Engineering* published by Kodansha/Elsevier in 1990 and the coeditor of *Kasseitan-Kiso to Oyo (Activated Carbon-Fundamentals and Application)* published by Kodansha Ltd. in 1992. He was elected Vice President of the International Adsorption Society (1992).

## PREFACE

The Fourth International Conference on Fundamentals of Adsorption was held in Kyoto, Japan, from May 17-22, 1992. This Conference followed the past three successful Conferences held in Schloss Elmau, Germany in 1983 (Co-Chairmen: A. L. Myers and G. Belfort), Santa Barbara, California USA in 1986 (Chairman: A. I. Liapis) and Sonthofen, Germany in 1989 (Chairman: A. B. Mersmann). The purpose of the Conferences is to provide a forum for chemists, chemical engineers, biochemists, environmental engineers and scientists/engineers in any other related fields to exchange ideas in the area of adsorption. The Fourth Conference was attended by 205 scientists/engineers from 28 countries, of which as a first occasion in the Asian area, 25 delegates were from Asian countries besides 84 from Japan.

Fortunately, the Conference was enjoyed by many participants for its high level scientific programs as well as local arrangements. Special thanks are due to Kenneth S. W. Sing (co-chairman) of Brunel, the University of West London (retired), Shivaji Sircar (co-chairman) of Air Product, U.S.A. and Yasushi Takeuchi (co-chairman) of Meiji University for their encouragement and help in every aspect of the organization of the Conference. I also appreciate the great help provided by the Scientific Advisory Board members: Martin Bülow of Central Institut für physikalische Chemie, GDR (currently with BOC, New Jersey), A.S.-T. Chiang of National Central University, Taiwan-China, G. Findenegg of Technische Universität Berlin, Germany, Seiichi Kondo of Fukui Institute of Technology, Japan, Hanju Lee of Yonsei University, Korea, A. I. Liapis of University of Missouri-Rolla, U.S.A., Y. H. Ma of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, U.S.A., Alan L. Myers of University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A., E. Richter of DMT-Gesellschaft für Forschung und Prüfung mbH, Germany, J. Rouquerol of CNRS, France, D. M. Ruthven of University of New Brunswick, Canada, R. P. Townsend of Unilever Research, U.K., Kazuo Tsutsumi of Toyohashi University of Technology, Japan, Klaus Unger of Johannes Gutenberg University, Germany, Pingdong Wu of Zhejiang University, China.

About 180 abstracts were received in response to Paper Call by May, 1991, when a Scientific Advisory Board members meeting was held in Tokyo. After careful review and discussion by the Board members, 63 papers were selected as oral presentations for three full days and two half day sessions, and about 100 were chosen as poster papers. Poster papers were displayed for two days, making discussions effective and intimate. After the Conference, reviewing of each paper submitted as full text was made by two reviewers. Besides the SAB members, the following scientists took part in reviewing the papers: Kazuyuki Chihara, Katsumi Kaneko, Masami Matsumura, A. V. Neimark, Morio Okazaki, Akiyoshi Sakoda, Hajime Tamon. Considering the results of the peer review and because of the page limit, only 96 of the 160 papers presented at the Conference are finally included in this Proceedings.

Two plenary lectures were selected so that audiences from industrial and fundamental areas can be familiarized with current progress. Shivaji Sircar from Air Products, U.S.A. and Morio Okazaki from Kyoto University gave pertinent lectures to fulfill this need.

During the Conference, Discussion Session on Pressure Swing Adsorption was held. More than one hundred individuals attended the session, where the state of the art was reviewed and problems to be solved in the future were introduced and discussed. A summary of the Discussion Session is given by D. M. Ruthven in this volume.

It should be noted that the International Adsorption Society was launched formally during the Conference by adopting the bylaws and electing the president and the board members. Alan L. Myers was elected President of the Society with M. Suzuki as tVice President. Chaim Aharoni, Joseph Ausikaitis, G. V. Baron, Diran Basmadjian, Brian Bolto, Douglas Levan, Yi Hua Ma, Alfons Mersmann, Douglas M. Ruthven, Kenneth Sing, William Steele, Yasushi Takeuchi, Daniel Tondeur, Pingdong Wu, Francis Meunier and Alirio Rodrigues were elected or nominated by the President as board members of the first term. Shivaji Sircar will serve as Treasurer and Kent Knaebel, the editor of "Adsorption News," is expected to take on the role of editor of a new journal, "Adsorption Science and Engineering."

Financial support for the Conference was provided through the Japan Adsorption Society (President: Yasushi Takeuchi) by its corporate members. Additional contributions were offered by Chiyoda Construction, Daiichi Fuel, Ebara-Infilco, Fuji-Davidson, Futamura Chemicals, Kawasaki Steel, Kobelco, Koken, Kuraray Chemical, Kurita, Kyowa Chemicals, Marutani-Kakoki, Midori Safety, Mitsubishi Chemicals, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Nihon Gaishi, Nihon Bel, Nihon Muki, Nihon Oxygen, Nittetsu Kakoki, Nippon Steel, Osaka Gas, Organo, Sanden, Sanko Chemical, Seibu-Giken, Sumitomo Heavy Industries, Takeda Chemicals, Teijin, Tokyo Yuki, Tosoh, and Toyo Engineering. Also National Science Foundation, Amoco, Air Products, Exxon, and UOP provided travel expenses for US academic participants. All this support is gratefully acknowledged.

Many people have played roles in the success of the Conference. I would like especially to thank the self-sacrificing efforts of Akiyoshi Sakoda for the arrangements and operation of the Conference in his role as Secretary. Without his devotion, the Conference could not have been carried out so smoothly.

Local arrangements and operations were conducted by Drs. M. Okazaki, H. Tamon and M. Miyahara and their laboratory members at Kyoto University. Their efforts are greatly acknowledged. Also the assistance of Mss. Shinko Takahashi and Hiroko Masai and the encouragement given by Mr. Ipeji Ohta of Kodansha Scientific Ltd. made possible the final publication of this volume on schedule.

In conclusion I would like to thank again all the participants and express my sincere appreciation for the efforts by the authors to make this volume a splendid addition to the existing literature in this field.

The next Conference will be held in the United States in 1995. Douglas LeVan of the University of Virginia agreed to organize the Conference and the site is tentatively selected at Asilomar Conference Center in Monterey, California, where beautiful scenery will add flavor and excitement to the discussion on adsorption. I hope the next Conference will provide ever closer and constructive occasion for exchanging ideas, information and experiences among adsorption scientists and engineers.

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January 1993, Tokyo



## CONTENTS

Editor's Biography .....	v
Contents .....	vii
Preface .....	xiii
<b>Plenary Lecture: Novel Applications of Adsorption Technology</b>	
S. Sircar .....	1
<b>Plenary Lecture: Roles of Capillary Condensation in Adsorption</b>	
M. Okazaki .....	11
Theoretical Interpretation and Classification of Adsorption Isotherms for Simple Fluids	
P. B. Balbuena, C. Lastoskie, K. E. Gubbins and N. Quirke .....	27
Simulated Counter-Current Chromatographic Bioreactor-Separators	
P. E. Barker, N. J. Ajongwen, M. T. Shieh and G. Ganetsos .....	35
Diffusion in Zeolite Adsorbents: Measurement, Modelling and Structure - Performance Relation	
G. V. Baron, M. Van de Voorde, H. Verelst, J. Martens and P. Jacobs .....	45
Computer Simulation Studies of the Adsorption of Kr in a Pore of Triangular Cross-Section	
M. J. Bojan and W. A. Steele .....	51
Synthesis, Sorptive Properties and Application of Spherically Granulated Titanium and Zirconium Hydroxophosphates	
A. I. Bortun and V. V. Strelko .....	59
Evaluation of the Micropore-Size Distribution Function from Gas Adsorption Data by Using a Simple Molecular Model	
P. Brauer, H.-R. Poosch, M. v. Szombathely, M. Heuchel and M. Jaroniec .....	67
Radial Anisotropy of the Active Carbon Particles	
B. Buczek .....	75
Adsorption of Multicomponent Aromatics on Y Zeolite and Silicalite	
A. S. T. Chiang, K. S. Lin and L. Y. Fun .....	81
Evaluation of Adsorbents for Volatile Organic Chemicals	
P. C. Chiang, J. H. You, T. F. Lin and P. Chang .....	89
Electrosorption on an Activated Carbon Bed	
K. T. Chue, G. Grévillet and D. Tondeur .....	97
Molecular Simulation of Adsorption and Diffusion in VPI-5 and Other Aluminophosphates	
R. F. Cracknell and K. E. Gubbins .....	105
Direct Determination and Multiplicity of Periodic States of Adsorption Cycles	
D. T. Croft and M. D. LeVan .....	113
Adsorption of Water Vapours in Natural and Modified Zeolites	
L. Czepirski and E. K.-Czepirska .....	121
Prediction of Zeolites Diffusivities	
K. Dahlke, G. Emig and E. Aust .....	129
A Molecular Dynamics Study of Adsorption and Transport of Fluid in Model Micropores	
T. Demi and D. Nicholson .....	137
Adsorption and Desorption Dynamics of Hydrocarbons, SO <sub>2</sub> and CO <sub>2</sub> onto Activated Carbon - Rate Mechanisms	
D. D. Do, X. Hu, P. Gray and P. Mayfield .....	145
Characteristics of Pore Structure of Adsorbents by Macromolecules Adsorption	
N. A. Eltekova and Y. A. Eltekov .....	153

Multilayer Adsorption and Pore Condensation in Controlled-Pore Glass: A Test of the Saam-Cole Theory of Mesopore Filling	
G. H. Findenegg, S. Groß and T. Michalski .....	161
PSA for Air Purification: Experiments and Modeling	
D. K. Friday, M. D. LeVan, J. J. Mahle and L. C. Buettner .....	169
Measurement and Prediction of Adsorption Equilibria of Quaternary Organic Solutes from Dilute Aqueous Solutions on Activated Carbon	
K. Fukuchi, S. Kobuchi and Y. Arai .....	177
Effect of Functional Groups on Adsorption of Organics Dissolved in Water onto Macroporous Resin Particles	
E. Furuya, K. E. Noll, J-E Sohn, S-S Lee, S. Yamashita and Y. Takeuchi .....	185
Adsorption of Organics onto High Silica Zeolite	
E. Furuya, N. Watanabe, S. Asano, M. Harada and S. Morishita .....	193
Adsorption of Human Immunoglobulins on Activated Supports	
L. Galati, R. Lavecchia, T. Lavecchia and L. Marrelli .....	201
Molecular Statistical Calculations of the Adsorption Equilibria of Single and Double Component Gaseous Systems in NaX Zeolites	
M. F. Gilyazov and A. M. Tolmachev and Y. K. Tovbin .....	209
Nonlinear Interaction of Laser Radiation with Chromat-anions ( $\text{CrO}_4^{2-}$ ) Adsorbed on Dispersed Silica Surface	
Y. D. Glinka, S. N. Naumenko, V. M. Ogenko and A. A. Chujko .....	217
Purification of Enzyme by Affinity Separation with Magnetic Adsorbent	
M. Goto, T. Imamura and T. Hirose .....	227
Adsorption of Argon, Methane, Nitrogen, Carbon Monoxide and Water Vapour on Sepiolite and $\text{AlPO}_4\text{-5}$ as Studied by Isothermal Microcalorimetry	
Y. Grillet, P. Llewellyn, N. Tosi-Pelleng, and J. Rouquerol .....	235
Optimization of the Operation Parameters for Rapid Pressure Swing Adsorption	
J. Guan and Z. Ye .....	243
Adsorption of Bovine Serum Albumin onto Surface-Modified Carbon Fibers and Cellulose Derivatives	
K-S. Ha, H. Hinago, A. Sakoda and M. Suzuki .....	251
Sorption of Ethene and Propane and Their Binary Mixtures in Zeolites	
J. A. Hampson and L. V. C. Rees .....	259
Methods of Characterizing Sorbents for Air Sampling Purposes	
M. Harper .....	267
Modifications of the Dubinin-Radushkevitch Equation for Microporous Adsorption	
G. R. Heal .....	275
A New Method for Investigation of Sorption Kinetics of Volatile Multi-Component Mixtures on Porous Solids	
J. Hille, M. Bülow and A. Micke .....	285
Hydrogen Sulfide Removal with Pressure Swing Adsorption from Process Off-gas	
J. Izumi, T. Morimoto, H. Tsutaya and K. Araki .....	293
Adsorption and Diffusion of Methane in Carbon Pores at Low Temperatures	
S. Jiang, C. L. Rhykerd, P. B. Balbuena, L. A. Pozhar and K. E. Gubbins .....	301
Microscopic Models for Adsorption Equilibrium in Heterogeneous Solids	
R. D. Kaminsky and P. A. Monson .....	309
Ultramicroporosimetry of Porous Solids by He Adsorption	
K. Kaneko, N. Setoyama, T. Suzuki and H. Kuwabara .....	315
The Use of High Resolution Adsorption Measurements for the Study of Porous Solids	
M. B. Kenny, K. S. W. Sing and C. R. Theocharis .....	323
Dynamic Behaviors in the Diffusion of Adsorbed Molecules in the Micropore of Zeolites as Investigated by Molecular Dynamics and Computer Graphics	
M. Kubo, T. Inui and A. Miyamoto .....	333
Competitive Adsorption of Polymer Chains at Fractal Surfaces	
N. Kurata, S. Anada and M. Kawaguchi .....	341
Computer Simulation and Performance Analysis of a Purged Rotary Dehumidifier	
S. M. Lai, P. C. Tseng and Y. K. Chuah .....	349
Modeling of Equalization in Air Separation by Pressure Swing Adsorption	
N. O. Lemcoff, S. J. Doong and A. I. LaCava .....	357



Surface Geometry Effects on Adsorption-Desorption Hysteresis, Latent Adsorption and Adsorption Probability Plots A. S.-Levy and D. Avnir .....	365
Effect of Structural Heterogeneity on Multicomponent Adsorption: Benzene and p-Xylene Mixture on Silicalite J. Li and O. Talu .....	373
Study on Treatment of Organic Wastewater with Modified Bentonite Adsorbent M-L. Liu and H-F. Chang.....	381
Adsorption of Proteins and Antibiotics on Porous Alumina Membranes Y. H. Ma, A. Bansal and W. M. Clark .....	389
Adsorb-Sim Modules for Simulation of Adsorption in Micropores: Activated Carbon, Zeolites, Silica and Random Media K. R. Matranga, F. Karavias, A. Stella, E. I. Segarra, A. Thompson, M. Allende, E. D. Glandt and A. L. Myers .....	397
Neutron Scattering Investigations of the Structure and Adsorption Properties of Activated Carbon Fibers A. Matsumoto, K. Kaneko and J. Ramsay .....	405
Effective Adsorption and Desorption Systems for Semimetal Hydrides Y. Matsumura, M. O. Ogasawara and M. Furuse .....	413
Description of Heterogeneous Surfaces in Activated Chemisorption V. Mayagoitia and I. Kornhauser .....	421
Effect of Combined Adsorption and Absorption in Migration of Soil Contaminants B. J. McCoy and D. E. Rolston .....	429
Chromatographic Study of Liquid Phase Adsorption of p-Tert-Octylphenol on Octadecylsilyl-Silica Gel K. Miyabe and M. Suzuki .....	437
An Estimation of Liquid Phase Adsorption Isotherms Based on the Capillary Phase Separation Concept M. Miyahara and M. Okazaki .....	445
Adsorption Efficiency of Seawater Uranium with Amidoxime Fiber Balls Packed in a Cage S. Morooka, A. Goto, T. Kago and K. Kusakabe .....	453
The Analysis of Surface and Pores of Activated Carbons by the Adsorption of Various Kinds of Gases K. Nakai, J. Sonoda, S. Kondo and I. Abe .....	461
Evaluation of Microporous Texture of Undecomposed and Decomposed $\beta$ -FeOOH Fine Particles by Means of Adsorption Isotherms of Nitrogen Gas and Water Vapor H. Naono, J. Sonoda, K. Oka and M. Hakuman .....	467
Thermodynamic and Kinetics Data of Sorption in Zeolites Determined by FTIR W. Nießen, H. G. Karge and L. Jozefowicz .....	475
Adsorption of Laterally Interacting Mixtures on Heterogeneous Solid Surfaces: A Model Study J. A. O'Brien .....	483
Adsorption Characteristics of Organic Substances on Surface-modified Carbon Adsorbents: Effects of Surface-chemical Structure of Carbon Adsorbents on Adsorption K. Ogino .....	491
Analysis of Bimodal Pore Structure from Mercury Porosimetry Using Percolation Approach C-Y. Park and S-K. Ihm .....	499
Swelling-Shrinking Behavior in Packed Beds of Adsorbent During Column Operations I. Park and K. S. Knaebel .....	507
Two-Body and Many-Body Interactions for Argon Adsorbed in Silicalite Zeolites R. J-M. Pellenq and D. Nicholson .....	515
Transport in Zeolites: Application of NMR and Computer Simulations to Probe Adsorption Phenomena R. L. Portsmouth and L. F. Gladden .....	523
Adsorptive Properties of Microporous ZrO <sub>2</sub> Gels J. Ragai, S. Selim, K. S. W. Sing and C. Theocharis .....	531
Intraparticle Diffusion and Convection in Adsorption Processes A. Rodrigues, Z. Lu, J. Loureiro and D. LeVan .....	537
Adsorption of Water Vapour on Activated Alumina D. M. Ruthven, M. Hussain and R. Desai .....	545

Two Surface Virial Analysis: Monoatomic Gas Adsorption on Graphite and Boron Nitride and Chlorofluorocarbon Adsorption on Microporous Carbon T. R. Rybolt and X. Zhang.....	553
Gas Adsorption Properties of MSC by Molecular Simulations A. Sakoda, T. Kasuh and M. Suzuki .....	559
Prediction of Highly Nonideal Ternary Adsorption Equilibria P. Schweighart and A. Mersmann.....	567
Effect of Structural Heterogeneity on the Diffusion of Aromatic Hydrocarbons in Large Silicalite Crystals D. B. Shah, C. J. Guo and D. T. Hayhurst.....	575
Prediction of High Pressure Multicomponent Adsorption Equilibria W. Sievers and A. Mersmann.....	583
Investigation of Ion Exchange Phenomena in Frontal Anion Exchange Chromatography of a Protein M. O. N.-Simonnot, M. Bailly and G. Grevillot.....	591
Porosity Characteristics of Lignite Chars G. G. Stavropoulos, S. A. Korili and G. P. Sakellariopoulos .....	599
Analysis of a Six Port Simulated Moving Bed Separation Unit G. Storti, M. Mazzotti, L. T. Furlan and M. Morbidelli.....	607
Sorption Kinetics of Benzene and p-Xylene on Template Supported Synthesized Gallosilicates P. Struve, A. Bergmann, A. Brenner, M. Bülow and K. K. Unger.....	615
On the Determination of Diffusion Coefficients by Uptake Rate Measurements L. M. Sun, V. Bourdin, Ph. Grenier and F. Meunier .....	623
Determination of Adsorption Equilibria and Bidisperse Transport Properties of Adsorbents Using a Shallow Bed-Diffusion Cell W. Sun, C. A. V. Costa and A. E. Rodrigues.....	631
Continuous Separation and Concentration of Proteins Using an Annular Chromatograph Y. Takahashi and S. Goto .....	639
Application of High Silica Zeolite to Remove Organic Vapors from Industrial Effluent Air Y. Takeuchi, H. Iwamoto, H. Asano and M. Harada .....	647
An Overview of Adsorptive Storage of Natural Gas O. Talu .....	655
Influence of Surface Oxides of Carbonaceous Adsorbent on Liquid-phase Desorption Characteristics of Aromatic Compound H. Tamon and M. Okazaki .....	663
Irreversible Adsorption in Porous Materials A. P. Thompson, D. S. Corti, A. L. Myers and E. D. Glandt .....	671
Analysis of Adsorption and Adhesion Behaviors of Modified Carbon Fibers by Means of Inverse Gas Chromatography K. Tsutsumi and K. Ban .....	679
Novel Application of Adsorption: Energy Recovery S. Ülkü .....	685
Computer Simulations of Benzene Adsorbed on Graphite. 85-298 K. A. Vernov and W. A. Steele .....	695
Pressure Swing Adsorption Processes-Design and Simulation U. v. Gemmingen .....	703
Industrial Application of Low-Temperature Steam Desorption System for Solvent Recovery by Activated Carbon N. Wakamatsu and Y. Iida .....	713
Effect of Pore Structure on the Adsorption of Coagulation Factor VIII on Aminoethyl- and DEAE-Glucomannan Gel M. Wakita, H. Morita and M. Yamaguchi .....	721
Adsorption of Low Molecular Weight Organic Acids on Polyvinylpyridine Resin P. Wu and P. Zhu .....	729
Highly Efficient Adsorbent for Separation of Carbon Monoxide Y. Xie, G. Yang, J. Qiu, X. Tong, J. Liu, B. Luo and Y. Tang .....	737
Heterogeneous Micropore Structure and Vapor Adsorption on Activated Carbons Z. Xie, C. Yuan, L. Ma and K. Guo .....	743

Development of Adsorption Refrigerator Using Silicagel-Water Pairs H. Yanagi, N. Okamoto, F. Komatsu, N. Ino, M. Ogura, M. Nishino and Y. Okamoto..	751
Recovery of Amine and Paints from Electrodeposition Wastewater by Adsorption on H-Form Resin: Cyclic Operation H. Yoshida, A. Okamoto and T. Kataoka .....	759
Breakthrough Curve for Adsorption of Acid Dye on Crosslinked Chitosan Fiber H. Yoshida, A. Okamoto, H. Yamasaki and T. Kataoka .....	767
Improvement to the Flory-Huggins VSM Y. Yuxin and A. Hongkui .....	775
Model for the Filling of Micropores Applicable to Adsorption of Hydrocarbons and Water by Activated Carbon C. Aharoni and M. J. B. Evans .....	779
Report of Discussion Session on Pressure Swing Adsorption D. M. Ruthven.....	787
Author Index .....	794
Keyword Index .....	797



Dr. Shivaji Sircar received his Ph.D. in chemical engineering from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, in 1970. After spending two years as a post-doctoral fellow at the same school, he joined Air Products and Chemicals, Inc. in Allentown, PA, in 1973, where he is currently employed as a Principal Research Associate.

During the last nineteen years at Air Products, he has been involved in research and development of gas and liquid separations by adsorption. He is the inventor of many PSA gas separation processes, four of which have been commercialized by Air Products. His research interests include thermodynamics, kinetics, process development, mathematical modeling, and material development related to surface phenomenon and adsorption, both at the fundamental and applied levels. His experience also includes design and operation of bench, as well as pilot scale equipment for process and material testing, process optimization, and scale-up.

He is the author of thirty-seven U.S. and sixty-five international patents and ninety-one scientific publications. He has lectured extensively in professional conferences and is a member of the American Chemical Society and the American Institute of Chemical Engineers. He was honored by AIChE with the Professional Progress Award in 1988.



## Novel Applications of Adsorption Technology

Shivaji Sircar

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### ABSTRACT

Three new applications of adsorption technology in the areas of air separation, hydrogen-hydrocarbon separation, and removal of pollutants from air are described. They use the concepts of pressure swing adsorption, selective surface flow and insitu sorption-reaction.

### INTRODUCTION

Separation and purification of fluid mixtures by selective adsorption has found numerous applications in chemical, petrochemical, biochemical and environmental industries [1]. Figure 1 demonstrates the phenomenal growth in this area. It plots the number of worldwide adsorption patents issued every year during the last twenty years with the key words given in the figure. Japan, United States and Germany are in the forefront of this development.

Applications of adsorption technology will continue to grow in the foreseeable future because the technology has not reached its maturity limits as shown by Figure 2. It plots the estimated technology maturity against technology use for a number of established and emerging separation processes. Gas and liquid phase adsorption trail the more established separation processes like distillation, absorption and extraction by a significant distance.

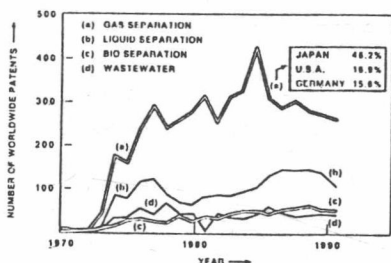


FIGURE 1: PATENT SURVEY (DERWENT)

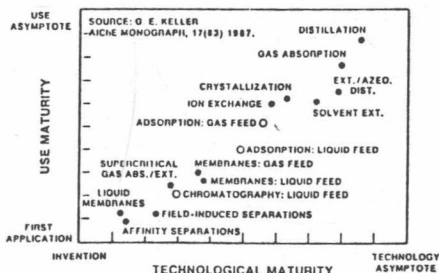


FIGURE 2: TECHNOLOGY MATURITY - USE

Another key element in the development of adsorption technology has been the availability of a very large spectrum of micro and mesoporous adsorbents with varying structures and surface properties. These include zeolites, activated carbons, aluminas, silica gels, ion exchange resins and polymeric adsorbents. New adsorbent structures or physico-chemical modification of existing materials are continuously being introduced.

The author believes that the endless choice of adsorbent materials and their



use in the design of innovative processes provide a very bright future for this technology as a separation tool. It should, however, be emphasized that a multidisciplinary integrated research and development between material and engineering sciences is called for.

The purpose of this paper is to describe three new applications of adsorption technology being developed by Air Products and Chemicals, Inc. They include:

- (a) Air Separation by Fractionated Vacuum Swing Adsorption (FVSA) Process
- (b) Bulk Hydrogen-Hydrocarbon Separation by Selective Surface Flow (SSF<sup>TM</sup>) Adsorbent Membranes
- (c) Removal of Trace Volatile Organic Contaminants (VOC) from Air by a Sorption-Reaction (SR) Scheme.

#### FRACTIONATED VACUUM SWING ADSORPTION (FVSA) PROCESS FOR AIR SEPARATION

Most aluminosilicate zeolites are polar adsorbents and they selectively adsorb  $N_2$  from air over  $O_2$  and Ar. Consequently, when dry air is passed through a zeolitic adsorbent column, which has been presaturated with an  $O_2$  enriched gas, an effluent having a composition close to that of the presaturating gas is produced until  $N_2$  breakthrough starts. The quantity of the effluent gas is in excess of the amount of the presaturating gas and the difference can be withdrawn as an  $O_2$  enriched product gas. A typical  $O_2$  product composition of 50-95 mole % can be produced by this method.

A  $N_2$  enriched gas can then be produced by desorbing the adsorbed  $N_2$  by lowering the column pressure. The  $N_2$  composition of the mixed desorbed gas, however, depends on factors such as (a)  $N_2$  adsorption capacity and selectivity of the zeolite from air at feed pressure, (b) levels of ad(de)sorption pressures, (c) adsorbent temperature changes during the ad(de)sorption processes, (d) kinetics of adsorption, and (e) amount of intra- and interparticle void gas in the column. The air-like void gas dilutes the composition of the desorbed gas. Typically, the desorbed gas is air-like at the beginning of the process and then it becomes more nitrogen enriched as the column pressure is lowered.

We examined the desorption characteristics of zeolite columns saturated with air at ambient pressure for four commercially available zeolites (NaX, 5A, Na-mordenite and CaX). Figure 3 shows the pure gas  $N_2$  and  $O_2$  adsorption isotherms for these zeolites at 30°C over a pressure range of 0-1.5 atm. It shows that both  $N_2$  adsorption capacity and selectivity over  $O_2$  increase in the order CaX > Na-mordenite > 5A > NaX zeolites. In particular, CaX zeolite shows significantly higher  $N_2$  adsorption capacity and selectivity than the other zeolites. The dashed and solid lines in Figure 3 are best fit of the data by the Langmuir model. Table 1 gives the Langmuir parameters.

Table 1. Langmuir Parameters for  $N_2$  and  $O_2$  at 30°C

Zeolite	Saturation Capacity m, moles/kg	Interaction Parameter $b_1$ ( $\text{atm}^{-1}$ )		$N_2/O_2$ Selectivity ( $b_{N_2}/b_{O_2}$ )
		$N_2$	$O_2$	
(a) Na-X	3.12	0.083	0.028	2.96
(b) Ca-NaA (5A)	1.41	0.370	0.092	4.00
(c) Na-Mordenite	1.47	0.602	0.126	4.78
(d) Ca-X	1.12	2.278	0.224	10.17

A very simple analytical mathematical model can be derived to evaluate isothermal desorption of an ideal binary gas mixture obeying Langmuir isotherms, if we assume that (a) local equilibrium prevails in the column and (b) axial mixing and pressure drops in the column are negligible.

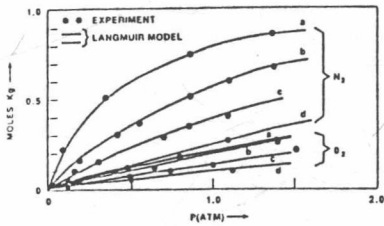
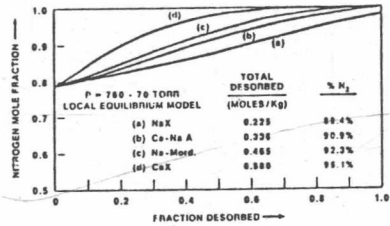
FIGURE 3: PURE N<sub>2</sub> AND O<sub>2</sub> ISOTHERMS

FIGURE 4: ISOTHERMAL DESORPTION OF AIR

Figure 4 shows the model isothermal air desorption characteristics of four adsorbents listed in Table 1. It plots effluent N<sub>2</sub> mole fraction as a function of fraction desorbed. The total amounts desorbed and the mixed desorbed gas compositions are also given in the figure. The figure shows that the rise in N<sub>2</sub> mole fraction in the desorbed gas with increasing amount desorbed gets sharper as the N<sub>2</sub> adsorption capacity and selectivity from air by the zeolite increases, as expected, but the mixed desorbed gas N<sub>2</sub> compositions are only between 88-95 mole% for these adsorbents. Such purity is not practically useful. A N<sub>2</sub> composition of above 98 mole% is required.

Figure 4 also shows that the zeolites NaX, 5A and Na-mordenite barely make 98% N<sub>2</sub> at the end of the desorption process. On the other hand, the CaX zeolite with the highest N<sub>2</sub> capacity and selectivity produces a decent amount of high purity N<sub>2</sub> at the lower pressure levels. This observation lead to the development of the Fractionated Vacuum Swing Adsorption process for simultaneous production of 80-90% O<sub>2</sub> and 98+% N<sub>2</sub> products from ambient air [2]. Figure 5 shows a flow sheet for the FVSA process. It consists of two parallel adsorbers packed with a layer of alumina at the feed end to remove water and CO<sub>2</sub> from ambient air followed by a layer of zeolite for air separation. It also contains two vacuum pumps, gas storage tanks, a nitrogen product compressor and necessary switch valves and gas headers. The cyclic process steps of the FVSA process are very simple. They consist of:

- Adsorption Step:** where air at near ambient pressure ( $P_A$ ) is passed through an adsorber which is presaturated with a 80-90% O<sub>2</sub>-rich gas. The effluent is a 80-90% O<sub>2</sub> enriched gas which is partly stored and the balance is withdrawn as the product O<sub>2</sub>. The step is continued until the N<sub>2</sub> mass transfer zone reaches the exit end of the column. The effluent is then vented until the column is saturated with air.
- Desorption Step I:** where the column is evacuated countercurrently to an intermediate vacuum level and the effluent gas is wasted.
- Desorption Step II:** where the adsorber is further evacuated countercurrently to the final desorption pressure ( $P_D$ ) and the effluent is collected as the 98+% N<sub>2</sub> product gas which may be recompressed.
- Pressurization:** where the column is countercurrently repressurized to near adsorption pressure level with a part of the O<sub>2</sub> enriched gas produced and stored during step (a). A new cycle is then started. The process of Figure 5 is designed in such a way that a continuous N<sub>2</sub> product is obtained. A typical cycle time for the process steps is

given in the Figure.

One of the advantages of this process is that the product N<sub>2</sub> is fairly dry because most of the water introduced into the adsorber during step (a) is desorbed during step (b) and that effluent is rejected.

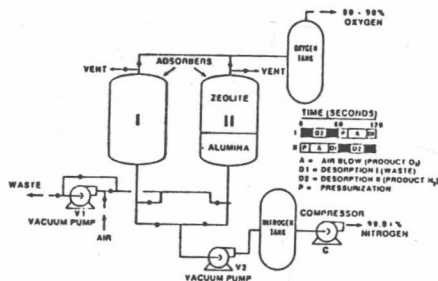


FIGURE 5: FLOWSHEET FOR FVSA

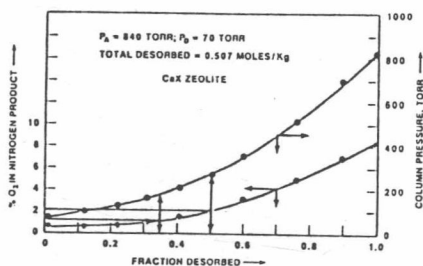


FIGURE 6: PERFORMANCE OF FVSA PROCESS

The FVSA process was tested in a bench scale unit using the CaX zeolite. Figure 6 shows a set of cyclic performance data. It gives the mole% of O<sub>2</sub> in the N<sub>2</sub> product by the process as a function of the fraction of total desorbed gas in step c. It also shows the column pressure corresponding to the fraction desorbed. It may be seen that about 34.0 and 50.0% of total desorbed gas can be collected as N<sub>2</sub> product of 99% and 98% N<sub>2</sub> purity, respectively.

Table 2. Performance of FVSA Process for Air Separation (CaX Zeolite)

Purity (%)	Oxygen Product		Purity (%)	Nitrogen Product	
	Recovery (%)	Capacity (moles/kg)		Recovery (%)	Capacity (moles/kg)
90.0	24.2	0.04	99.0	30.0	0.17
			98.0	42.6	0.25

Table 2 summarizes the performance of this process for the operating conditions of Figure 6. The process can be successfully used to simultaneously produce a 80-90% O<sub>2</sub> product and a 98+% N<sub>2</sub> product from air.

SELECTIVE SURFACE FLOW MEMBRANE FOR HYDROGEN-HYDROCARBON SEPARATION

About 35 years ago, R. M. Barrer demonstrated the concept of selective surface flow of gases on an adsorbent material for separation of gas mixtures using a compressed plug of non-porous carbon [3]. Many other publications report this phenomenon [4-6]. In order to use this concept for practical gas separation, however, requires that a thin layer (<5µm) of a microporous adsorbent membrane be produced as shown by Figure 7. The figure also depicts the mechanism of gas separation through such a membrane.

Assume that a binary gas mixture is passed over one side of the adsorbent membrane at high pressure while maintaining a low pressure at the other side of the membrane. The more selectively adsorbed molecules (large circles) of the gas mixture will be preferentially adsorbed over the other (small circles) into the adsorbent pore at high pressure side and then migrate selectively on the pore surface to the low pressure side where they will desorb into the gas phase. Furthermore, if the pores of the adsorbent membrane are small in