

RICE HUSK ASH SILICA AS A SUPPORT MATERIAL FOR IRON AND  
RUTHENIUM BASED HETEROGENEOUS CATALYST

by

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	<b>Page Number</b>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATION	vii
LIST OF TABLE	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF SCHEMES	xii
ABSTRAK	xiii
ABSTRACT	xv
<b>CHAPTER 1 - LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 RICE HUSK ASH	2
1.1.1 THE SOURCE OF RICE HUSK ASH	2
1.1.2 THE PROPERTIES OF RICE HUSK ASH	3
1.1.3 PRODUCTION, PURIFICATION AND CHARACTERIZATION OF SILICA FROM RICE HUSK ASH	6
1.1.4 SOME APPLICATIONS OF SILICA FROM RICE HUSK ASH	9

1.2	SILICA AS SUPPORT MATERIAL AND HETEROGENEOUS CATALYSTS	13
1.2.1	VANADIUM	14
1.2.2	MOLYBDENUM	17
1.2.3	HETEROPOLY ACIDS	18
1.2.4	TITANIUM	21
1.2.5	OTHER METALS	24
1.3	RICE HUSK ASH-A SUPPORT FOR METAL OXIDE CATALYSTS	28
1.4	FRIEDEL-CRAFT BENXYLATION REACTION	35
1.5	HYDROXYLATION OF PHENOLS	38
1.6	AIM AND SCOPE OF CURRENT WORK	40

## **CHAPTER 2 - EXPERIMENTAL**

2.0	RAW MATERIALS AND CHEMICALS	42
2.1	CHEMICALS	42
2.2	RICE HUSK ASH	43
2.3	METHODS	43
2.3.1	PREPARATION OF 6M NaOH	43
2.3.2	PREPARATION OF 3M HNO <sub>3</sub>	44
2.3.3	PREPARATION OF INCORPORATED METAL ACID SOLUTION	44

2.3.4	PREPARATION OF SODIUM SILICATE SOLUTION	44
2.3.5	SAMPLE PREPARATION	44
2.4	SAMPLE CHARACTERIZATION	45
2.4.1	BET	46
2.4.2	SEM	46
2.4.3	FTIR	47
2.4.4	XRD	47
2.4.5	GCMS	47
2.5	FRIEDEL-CRAFT REACTION	
2.5.1	BENZYLATION OF TOLUENE WITH BENZYL CHLORIDE	48
2.6	HYDROXYLATION OF PHENOLS	49
 <b>CHAPTER 3 - SAMPLE CHARACTERIZATION</b>		
3.0	SILICA GEL VIA SOL-GEL TECHNIQUE	51
3.1	FTIR	52
3.2	BET	55
3.3	SEM	62
3.4	XRD	66
3.5	EDX	69

## **CHAPTER 4 - CATALYTIC ACTIVITY**

4.0	FRIEDEL –CRAFT BENZYLATION OF TOLUENE WITH BENZYL CHLORIDE	71
4.1	HYROXYLATION OF PHENOLS	77

## **CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION**

5.0	CONCLUSION	81
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	REFERENCES	83
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APPENDIXES

## List of Abbreviation

XRD	– X-ray Diffractometry
BET	– Brunauer-Emmett-Teller
SEM	– Scanning Electron Microscopy
EDX	– Energy dispersive Spectrometry
FTIR	– Fourier Transform Infra-Red
RHA	– Rice Husk Ash
RHA-Fe	– Iron incorporated Rice Husk Ash
RHA-Fe 700	– Iron incorporated Rice Husk Ash calcined at 700 °C
RHA-Ru	– Ruthenium incorporated Rice Husk Ash
RHA- Ru 700	– Ruthenium incorporated Rice Husk Ash calcined at 700 °C
LOI	– Loss of Ignition
TGA	– Thermal Gravimetric Analysis
GC-MS	– Gas Chromatography- Mass Spectra
NR	– Natural Rubber
LLDPE	– Linear Low Density Polyethylene
FRP	– Fiber-reinforced Plastic
HPA	– Heteropoly Acid
ODH	– Oxidative dehydrogenation
TOF	– Turn over frequency

## List of Table

	<b><u>Page</u></b>
Table 1: The Chemical Composition of RHA from reference	4
Table 2: Chemical composition of rice husk (% dry basis)	5
Table 3: Chemical analysis of fermented and unfermented rice husk	5
Table 4: Properties of Catalysts prepared	15
Table 5: Results of physical characterization of silica-included HPA's	19
Table 6: Comparison of properties of SiO <sub>2</sub> -RHA and SiO <sub>2</sub> -gel	30
Table 7: Surface properties of nickel catalysts on SiO <sub>2</sub> -RHA and SiO <sub>2</sub> -gel	30
Table 8: BET data of RHA and all other metal incorporated RHA samples.	56
Table 9: The EDX results of metal incorporated RHA	69
Table 10: The product distribution of benzylation of toluene with RHA-Fe and RHA-Fe 700 as catalyst. T1 = 1 <sup>st</sup> reuse and T2 = 2 <sup>nd</sup> reuse.	74
Table 11: The EDX results of RHA-Fe and RHA-Fe 700. R1 = after	

1<sup>st</sup> use, R2 = after 2<sup>nd</sup> use, R3 = after 3<sup>rd</sup> use. 75

Table 12: Catalytic activity of RHA-Fe 700 in phenol hydroxylation  
by H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> 80

## List of Figures

	<u>Page</u>
Figure 1: XRD patterns of Ni(NO <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> ·6H <sub>2</sub> O supported on SiO <sub>2</sub> -RHA by incipient wetness techniques and calcinations at 573-873 K for 4 h	29
Figure 2: The FT-IR spectra of RHA, RHA-Fe and RHA-Fe 700	54
Figure 3: The IR spectra of RHA-Ru and RHA-Ru 700	55
Figure 4: The Nitrogen adsorption isotherm for RHA-Ru. ◆ is the adsorption branch, and Δ is the desorption branch. Inset: pore distribution graph of RHA-Ru.	58
Figure 5: The Nitrogen adsorption isotherm for RHA-Ru 700. ◆ is the adsorption branch, and Δ is the desorption branch. Inset: the pore distribution graph of RHA-Ru 700.	59
Figure 6: The Nitrogen adsorption isotherm for RHA-Fe 700. ◆ is the adsorption branch, and Δ is the desorption branch. Inset: pore distribution graph for RHA-Fe 700 .	60
Figure 7: The Nitrogen adsorption isotherm for RHA-Fe. ◆ is the adsorption branch, and Δ is the desorption branch. Inset: pore distribution graph for RHA-Fe.	61

Figure 8: RHA (X 1.00K)	62
Figure 9: RHA-Fe 700 (x 1.50K)	63
Figure 10: RHA-Fe (x 1.50K)	63
Figure 11: RHA-Fe 700 (x 3.00K).	64
Figure 12: RHA-Ru (X 3.00 K)	65
Figure 13: RHA-Ru 700 (X 3.00 K)	65
Figure 14: RHA-Ru 700 (X 15.00 K)	66
Figure 15: X-ray powder diffraction spectrum of RHA	66
Figure 16: X-ray diffraction spectrogram of RHA-Fe 700.	67
Figure 17: X-ray powder diffraction of RHA-Ru	68
Figure 18: X-ray powder diffraction of RHA-Ru 700	68
Figure 19: Graph of percentage yield versus time under refluxing condition	71
Figure 20: Graph of percentage yield versus reaction temperature. (Reaction carried for 60 minutes)	72
Figure 21: The GC chromatogram of product with RHA-Fe as catalyst. (RHA-Fe 700 gave similar chromatogram).	73

## List of Schemes

	<u>Page</u>
Scheme 1: The formation of glycolato and catecholato silicates from RHA	11
Scheme 2: Schematic Diagram of the Friedel-Craft reaction	36
Scheme 3: Sample preparation	
45	
Scheme 4: The expected products from the Friedel – Craft reaction between toluene and benzylchloride.	49
Scheme 5: The expected products from the hydroxylation of phenols with H <sub>2</sub> O <sub>2</sub> .	50
Scheme 6: The suggested mechanism for the benzylation reaction of toluene catalyzed by RHA-Fe/RHA-Fe 700	76

**ABU SEKAM PADI – BAHAN PENYOKONG BAGI MANGKIN OKSIDA  
LOGAM (FERUM DAN RUTHENIUM) HETEROGEN**

**ABSTRAK**

Sampel silika daripada abu sekam padi yang disokong oleh logam ferum dan ruthenium telah disediakan melalui teknik sol-gel. Ia disediakan dengan larutan akues garam logam dan HNO<sub>3</sub> 3.0 M. Analisis XRD menunjukkan bahawa kesemua sampel yang telah disediakan itu wujud dalam keadaan amorfus. Nilai BET bagi RHA-Fe dan RHA-Fe 700 didapati adalah 87.40 dan 55.83 m<sup>2</sup>g<sup>-1</sup>. RHA-Fe dan RHA-Fe 700 bertindak aktif sebagai mangkin heterogen dalam tindak balas diantara toluene dan benzil klorida. Benzil klorida mono tertukarganti, didapati menjadi hasil utama tindakbalas ini dengan yield sebanyak 92%. GC pula menunjukkan kedua-dua isomer *ortho* dan *para* wujud pada kuantiti yang seakan sama. Sementara itu, dalam sampel silika dimana Ruthenium digunakan sebagai bahan penyokong, (RHA-Ru 700) telah menunjukkan sifat-sifat yang unik berbanding sampel RHA-Fe dan RHA-Fe 700. Gambarajah SEM bagi RHA-Ru700 yang wujud dalam keadaan amorfus, jelas menunjukkan pembentukan nano rod yang permukaan luarannya rata. RHA-Ru mempunyai luas permukaan sebanyak ca. 65 m<sup>2</sup>g<sup>-1</sup>, sementara RHA-Ru 700 hanya menunjukkan nilai sebanyak 10 m<sup>2</sup>g<sup>-1</sup>. Penurunan pada nilai luas

permukaan adalah konsisten dengan pembentukan rod yang berbentuk kristal. Mengikuti graf taburan liang, terdapat dua taburan liang utama bagi RHA-Ru, yang masing-masing menunjukkan, diantara 40 dan 100 Å dan juga diantara 150 hingga 400 Å. Kesemua katalisis yang disediakan wujud dalam keadaan mesoporus.

RICE HUSK ASH SILICA AS A SUPPORT MATERIAL FOR IRON AND  
RUTHENIUM BASED HETEROGENEOUS CATALYST

**ABSTRACT**

Rice husk ash silica as a support material for iron (RHA-Fe) and ruthenium (RHA-Ru) based heterogeneous catalysts were prepared through the sol-gel technique using an aqueous solution of metal salt in 3.0 M HNO<sub>3</sub>. The XRD analysis showed that all samples prepared were in amorphous state. The BET values for the RHA-Fe and RHA-Fe 700 (after calcinations) were found to be 87.40 and 55.83 m<sup>2</sup>g<sup>-1</sup> respectively. The prepared RHA-Fe and RHA-Fe700 were found to be active as heterogeneous catalysts and showed high activity in the reaction between toluene and benzyl chloride. The mono substituted benzyltoluene was the major product and both catalysts yielded more than 92% of this isomer. The GC shows that both the ortho and para substituted mono isomers were present in about equal quantities. The ruthenium derivatives, RHA-Ru 700 showed very unique properties compared to the RHA-Fe samples. The SEM micrographs of RHA-Ru 700 showed the formation of well-defined flat elongated nano-sized rods with a smooth outer surface among the amorphous powder. RHA-Ru had a specific surface area of ca. 65 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>, while RHA-Ru 700 had only ca. 10 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>. The decrease in specific surface area was

consistent with the formation of the rod shaped crystalline phase. From the pore distribution graphs, there were two distinct pore size distributions for RHA-Ru. These were between 40 and 100 Å and between 150 to 400 Å respectively. All the catalysts prepared were shown to be mesoporous except for RHA-Ru 700 which shows some crystalline state after calcination.

List of publications made based on this project.

1. SILICA SUPPORTED METAL OXIDE CATALYST FROM RICE HUSK ASH

Farook Adam, Bahruddin Saad, **Saraswathy Balakrishnan** and

Fazliawati Mahayuddin *"Paper presented for the Regional Conference for Young Chemist 2004"*

2. SYNTHESIS AND CHARACTERISATION OF A NOVEL

HETEROGENEOUS CATALYST FROM RICE HUSK ASH – THE  
FRIEDEL-CRAFT BENZYLATION OF TOLUENE WITH BENZYL  
CHLORIDE

Farook Adam, Kalaivani Kandasamy and **Saraswathy Balakrishnan**

*"Paper presented for the Regional Conference for Young Chemist 2004"*

3. SYNTHESIS AND CHARACTERISATION OF A NOVEL

HETEROGENEOUS CATALYST FROM RICE HUSK ASH – THE  
FRIEDEL-CRAFT BENZYLATION OF TOLUENE WITH BENZYL  
CHLORIDE

*School of Chemical Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia. 11800 Penang,  
Malaysia.*

*F.Adam, **B.Saraswathy**, K.Kalaivani, J. Colloid Interface Sci. 304 (2004)  
137*

4. RICE HUSK ASH SILICA AS A NEW SUPPORT MATERIAL FOR  
RUTHENIUM BASED HETEROGENOUS CATALYST

*School of Chemical Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia. 11800 Penang,  
Malaysia.*

*F.Adam, **B.Saraswathy**, P.L Wong, Journal of Physical Science Vol.  
17(2) 1-13, 2006*

5. RICE HUSK ASH – A SUPPORT FOR HETEROGENOUS METAL  
OXIDE CATALYSTS

**Saraswathy Balakrishnan.** *School of Chemical Sciences, Universiti  
Sains Malaysia. 11800 Penang, Malaysia*

Poster presentation during Post graduate week, 2004 organized by  
Institute of Post Graduate Studies, *Universiti Sains Malaysia. 11800  
Penang, Malaysia*

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This review describes the usage of silica powders and gels in many industrial sectors and chemical reactions. This review will make an attempt to collect together data on all the research which has been carried out using rice husk ash as the main source of silica based products. Rice husk ash contains over 90% silica and can be an economically viable raw material for the production of silicates and silica. It has unique properties which makes it a valuable raw material with many uses.

Another interesting area is the supported metal catalysts on silica which are widely applied in many important reactions. Amorphous silica is well-known and commonly used as support material due to its high surface area where it will provide sufficient surface area for the metal to disperse. This review will also describe the methods involved in the preparation of such modified catalysts and its application in many chemical reactions.

## **1.1 RICE HUSK ASH**

### **1.1.1 The source of Rice Husk Ash**

South and South East Asia account for over 90 % of world's rice production. Like most other biomass material, rice husk contains a high amount of organic volatiles. Thus, rice husk is recognized as a potential source of energy. Moreover, its ~ 20 % ash content comprising of over 95 % amorphous silica would make the rice husk ash utilization economically attractive [1]. Rice husk is a milling by-product of rice and is a major waste product of the agriculture industry. It is also abundantly available. Rice husk is a residue produced in significant quantity on a global basis. While they are used as a fuel in some regions, in other countries they are treated as waste, causing pollution and disposal problems. Due to growing environmental concern, and the need to conserve energy and resources, efforts have been made to burn the husks under controlled conditions and to utilize the resultant ash as building material [2].

Rice husk ash (RHA) contains high amount of silicon dioxide. The non-crystalline phase in RHA obtained from combustion at temperatures below 600 °C consists primarily of a disordered Si-O structure. It is the product of decomposition and sintering of opaline or hydrous silica that result without

melting. Occasionally, a small amount of crystalline impurities may be present, including quartz, cristoballite and or tridymite. When RHA is produced by uncontrolled combustion, the ash is generally crystalline and exhibit poor reactive properties. However, by burning the rice husk under controlled temperature and atmosphere, highly reactive RHA can be obtained [2].

Amorphous silica, is normally extracted from rice husk by acid leaching, and followed by carbon removing process by pyrolysis. Pure silica with a high specific surface area, high melting point and high porosity can be obtained from rice husks. These properties make the ash a valuable raw material for many industries.

### **1.1.2 The Properties of Rice Husk Ash**

Rice husk essentially consists of the following layers, (see Figure 1) (i) outer epidermis coated with a thick cuticle layer of highly silicified sinuous cells, (ii) sclerenchyma of hypoderm fibers also with a thick lignified and silicified wall, (iii) spongy parenchyma cells, and (iv) inner epidermis of isodiametric cells [3]. The properties of rice husk ash and its main composition are presented in Table 1[4]. The organic materials consist of cellulose and lignin which turn to CO<sub>2</sub> and CO when rice husk burns in air. The ash contains mainly silica (90%), and a small portion of metal oxides (~ 5%) and residual carbon obtained from open burning.

**Table 1: The chemical composition of RHA from reference [4]**

<b>Compounds</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>SiO<sub>2</sub></b>	94.04
<b>Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub></b>	0.249
<b>Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub></b>	0.136
<b>CaO</b>	0.622
<b>MgO</b>	0.442
<b>Na<sub>2</sub>O</b>	0.023
<b>K<sub>2</sub>O</b>	2.49
<b>LOI</b>	3.52
<b>Total</b>	101.5

**(LOI: Loss of Ignition)**

Rice husk is a highly volatile fuel. The proximate analysis on rice husk samples to determine the weight fractions of volatiles matter, fixed carbon and ash on rice husk were carried out by Mansary and Ghaly [5]. Rice husk samples from four varieties of rice (Lemont, ROK 14, Cp 4 and Pa Potho) were collected for the study. The results of the proximate analysis and chemical composition are given in Table 2 and 3.

**Table 2: Analysis of rice husk (% dry basis) [5]**

<b>Rice husk</b>	<b>Volatile matter</b>	<b>Fixed carbon</b>	<b>Ash</b>
<b>Lemont</b>	66.40	13.60	20.00
<b>ROK 14</b>	67.30	13.90	18.80
<b>CP 4</b>	63.00	12.40	24.60
<b>Pa Potho</b>	67.60	14.20	18.20
<b>Average</b>	66.08	13.53	20.20

**Table 3: Chemical composition of rice husk (% dry basis) [5]**

<b>Rice husk</b>	<b>Cellulose</b>	<b>Hemicellulose</b>	<b>Lignin</b>
<b>Lemont</b>	29.20	20.10	30.70
<b>ROK 14</b>	33.47	21.03	26.70
<b>CP 4</b>	25.89	18.10	31.41
<b>Pa Potho</b>	35.50	21.35	24.95
<b>Average</b>	31.02	20.15	28.44

The data collected from their study shows some sort of similarities in the composition of rice husk. The average of the volatile matter is 66.10 %, 13.53 % for fixed carbon and it contains 20.40 % of ash. Cellulose is the highest

component in all the samples with an average percentage of 31.02 %. Based on this table, it shows that ~ 80% is organic material. Therefore rice husk purely contains ~ 20 % of inorganic material which is silica compound.

### **1.1.3 Production, Purification and Characterization of Silica from Rice Husk Ash**

Many studies were carried out to maximize the production, the purification methods and to characterize the surface properties of silica from rice husk ash. In the early 1950's ceramic engineers used RHA as a source of raw material [6]. Ibrahim et.al [7, 8, and 9] had studied the surface properties of silica resulting from thermal treatment of RHA. Silica samples were prepared by burning rice husk ash at various temperatures from 500 °C to 1400 °C for a period of 3 hours. Their findings showed that the ratio of absorbency bands corresponding to the Si---OH and Si---O groups occurring at 810 cm<sup>-1</sup> gave the amount of Si---OH left undestroyed at each firing temperature.

The results obtained were compared with those of silica gel. Silica gel lost its OH group above 1200 °C while rice husk silica lost it at about 700 °C. No crystalline phase was detected by X-ray diffraction analysis at 700 °C for RHA. It also showed that cristobalite started to appear at 900 °C. The unordered cristobalite phase was found up to 1200 °C. Ordered cristobalite and tridymite were detected by X-ray at 1300 °C and 1400 °C. Ibrahim et.al concluded that rice husk ash silica is similar in nature to silica gel. It follows the sequence of transformation suggested by Florke for the different crystalline