Design and Synthesis of Hydroxide Ion–Conductive Metal–Organic Frameworks Based on Salt Inclusion

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Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: We demonstrate a metal–organic framework (MOF) design for the inclusion of hydroxide ions. Salt inclusion method was applied to an alkaline-stable ZIF-8 (ZIF = zeolitic imidazolate framework) to introduce alkalammonium hydroxides as ionic carriers. We found that tetrabutylammonium salts are immobilized inside the pores by a hydrophobic interaction between the alkyl groups of the salt and the framework, which significantly increases the hydrophilicity of ZIF-8. Furthermore, ZIF-8 including the salt exhibited a capacity for OH− ion exchange, implying that freely exchangeable OH− ions are present in the MOF. ZIF-8 containing OH− ions showed an ionic conductivity of 2.3 × 10−8 S cm−1 at 25 °C, which is 4 orders of magnitude higher than that of the blank ZIF-8. This is the first example of an MOF-based hydroxide ion conductor.

Ionic conductors are key materials for the construction of energy conversion and storage devices such as secondary batteries and fuel cells.1 Recently, hydroxide ion conductors have received a great deal of interest as electrolytes for alkaline fuel cells and batteries,1−7 as the hydroxide ion (OH−) is an essential charge carrier as well as proton carriers in alkaline electrolytes.8−11 Hydroxide ion conductors differ from proton carriers in MOFs in that hydroxide ion carriers are opposite in charge to H+(H3O+) ions, there are two prerequisites for the reaction: an alkaline-stable porous MOF is used as the mother framework, and cations having an affinity to adsorb to the frameworks must be employed. We thus chose ZIF-8 (ZIF = zeolitic imidazolate framework; Figure 1a,b)14 as the mother framework, which is highly stable for Lewis bases.14a,15 Considering that the hydrophobic pore surface inside ZIF-8 is produced as a result of the presence of a methyl group on the ligands,14d n-tetrabutylammonium hydroxide salt, NBu4OH (Bu = n-butyl), containing alkyl groups was selected as the included salt. The alkylammonium cations are likely to be immobilized inside the pores through a hydrophobic interaction between the alkyl groups and the hydrophobic framework in ZIF-8 (Figure 1c). Here, we report the successful production of a novel MOF containing hydroxide ions, (NBu4)3m(A)m(Zn(mim))3z (mim = 2-methylimidazole; A− = hydrocarbonate (abbreviated here as NBu4-ZIF-8) and hydroxide ions (NBu4-ZIF-8-OH)). The NBu4+ ions are sufficiently immobilized in ZIF-8 for the MOF to retain OH− ions. We were able to confirm that including the hydroxide salt enhanced the ionic conductivity by 4 orders of magnitude.

NBu4-ZIF-8 was prepared by mixing ZIF-8 and an aqueous solution of NBu4OH (details are given in the Supporting Information). ZIF-8 was synthesized by mixing a methanol solution of Zn(NO3)2·6H2O and 2-methylimidazole, in accordance with a procedure reported previously.14c Elemental analysis revealed that NBu4-ZIF-8 has 0.70 ion pairs per ZIF-8...
cage and that the OH$^-$ ions in the MOF are possibly converted to HCO$_3^-$ ions because of the absorption of CO$_2$ from the air. The infrared spectrum of NBu$_4$-ZIF-8 exhibited CH stretching modes of the butyl groups, which are not derived from ZIF-8, at 2961 and 2876 cm$^{-1}$, indicating the presence of NBu$_4^+$ ions (Figure S1, Supporting Information). To eliminate the possibility that NBu$_4^+$ molecules are derived from Hofmann elimination, a decomposition reaction of NR$_4$OH to give NR$_3$ molecules, we examined the structure of the included cations by measuring the $^1$H NMR spectra of NBu$_4$-ZIF-8 dissolved in D$_2$O/D$_2$SO$_4$ (9/1). We could not recognize any signals assignable to NBu$_4HCO_3$ in the spectra (Figure S2, Supporting Information), which ruled out the presence of NBu$_4$HCO$_3$. These molecules were detected by temperature-programmed desorption mass spectrometry at mass numbers of 18 (i.e., H$_2$O), 44 (CO$_2$), and 56 (C$_4$H$_8$) (Figure S4, Supporting Information). These results confirm the stability of the salt inclusion state up to 120 °C. It should be noted that the included salt could not be removed by further washing with water, even though water is a good solvent for this salt, implying that the guest salts are trapped through a strong hydrophobic interaction with the framework. The hydrophilic counterions, however, are likely to be exchangeable.

To clarify the crystal structure of NBu$_4$-ZIF-8, we conducted in-house X-ray powder diffraction (XRPD) measurements (Figure S5, Supporting Information). The diffraction pattern of NBu$_4$-ZIF-8 appeared to be fundamentally the same as that of the starting ZIF-8, indicating that the framework structure of ZIF-8 does not decompose when the reaction proceeds under strong alkaline conditions (pH >14). There were, however, apparent differences in the relative intensities of the ZIF-8 and NBu$_4$-ZIF-8 spectra; the atomic arrangement in ZIF-8 is modified by the salt inclusion without any change to the crystal symmetry. This strongly suggests the presence of guest salts in the pore space of ZIF-8. To obtain direct evidence of this, we performed an electron density visualization by means of maximum entropy method (MEM)—Rietveld analysis using synchrotron XRPD data obtained on the RIKEN materials science beamline BL44B2 at SPring-8 (details are given in the Supporting Information). Figure 2 shows the isodensity surface and contour maps of ZIF-8 and NBu$_4$-ZIF-8. As shown in Figure 2a,c for ZIF-8, no charge localization was observed in the pore. In contrast, additional charge was found around the cage center in NBu$_4$-ZIF-8. From these results, we concluded that ZIF-8 encapsulates the NBu$_4$HCO$_3$ salts inside the pore. Judging from the pore diameter of 11.6 Å, there should be some extra space between ZIF-8 and the NBu$_4$HCO$_3$ salts. We conducted nitrogen gas adsorption measurements at 77 K to verify this assumption (Figure S7, Supporting Information) and found that the surface area of ZIF-8 (1664 m$^2$ g$^{-1}$) was reduced by 52% (61%, calculated on the basis of the unit cells of m$^2$ mol$^{-1}$) to 871 m$^2$ g$^{-1}$ (BET) by the salt inclusion. Considering that 30% of the cages were not occupied by the salt, guest-accessible space is thought to remain even in salt-occupied cages.

To examine the anion exchange ability for OH$^-$ ions, we induced an ion-exchange reaction by stirring NBu$_4$-ZIF-8 powder in NaOH aqueous solution (see the Supporting Information) and estimated the amount of OH$^-$ ion adsorption using CO$_2$ gas adsorption measurements. Figure 3 shows the CO$_2$ adsorption isotherms of the ion-exchanged sample (NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH) at 298 K. There is a clear difference between the isotherms of NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH and NBu$_4$-ZIF-8, and judging by the linear increase in the adsorption with pressure, CO$_2$ is physically adsorbed in NBu$_4$-ZIF-8. Above 0.2 kPa, the adsorption curve of NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH follows the same trend as that of NBu$_4$-ZIF-8, suggesting that the porous structure of NBu$_4$-ZIF-8 does not change with the reaction. NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH was found to absorb CO$_2$ in low-pressure regions (less than 0.2 kPa), and the increase in the adsorption is assigned to the chemisorption of CO$_2$ resulting from the neutralization of OH$^-$ ions: i.e., the formation of HCO$_3^-$ ions. The observed

Figure 1. Representation of the crystal structure of ZIF-8 and a schematic image of the salt inclusion: (a) cage and (b) 3-D porous SOD structures of ZIF-8. (c) Schematic view of the preparation procedure for NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH.

Figure 2. Electron density distribution derived from the synchrotron XRPD data of ZIF-8 and NBu$_4$-ZIF-8: isodensity (0.15 e Å$^{-3}$) surface maps of (a) ZIF-8 and (b) NBu$_4$-ZIF-8 and contour maps in the (200) plane of (c) ZIF-8 and (d) NBu$_4$-ZIF-8. Contour lines are drawn from 0.01 to 0.70 e Å$^{-3}$ at intervals of 0.05 e Å$^{-3}$.

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increase corresponds to a replacement of 47% of the initially included HCO$_3^-$ ions by OH$^-$ ions and 0.21 mmol g$^{-1}$ of the OH$^-$ concentration in NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first example of an MOF including free OH$^-$ ions. Other anions included in NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH are likely to be HCO$_3^-$ or CO$_3^{2-}$ ions. According to the acidity of HCO$_3^-$ ($pK_a = 10.3$), we hypothesize that divalent CO$_3^{2-}$ ions form in the pores during the exchange reaction ($pH > 14$) and are more strongly adsorbed to the framework than the monovalent HCO$_3^-$ ions. The existence of CO$_3^{2-}$ ions probably prevents complete anion exchange to OH$^-$ ions. Furthermore, elemental analysis revealed that there is no significant difference between the contents of NBu$_4^+$ ions before and after the ion exchange, indicating that the cations were not exchanged through this procedure (see the Supporting Information). Note that we could not observe CO$_2$ chemisorption for blank ZIF-8 even after treatment in NaOH aqueous solution, which suggests that ZIF-8 does not have the capacity for OH$^-$ ion inclusion. As shown in Figure S7 (Supporting Information), the surface area of NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH (868 m$^2$ g$^{-1}$) was almost the same as that of NBu$_4$-ZIF-8 (871 m$^2$ g$^{-1}$), indicating that there is no remarkable change in the porous structure. This also indicates that the cations are bound stably by the framework of ZIF-8.

We found that the included OH$^-$ ions are exchangeable. To evaluate the effect of the included hydroxide salts on the ionic conductivity, we performed ac impedance measurements using compacted pellets of the powdered sample. All of the NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH measurements were performed under nitrogen gas conditions to avoid the absorption of CO$_2$ from the air. The ionic conductivities of NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH and ZIF-8 were determined to be 2.3 $\times$ 10$^{-8}$ S cm$^{-1}$ (99% RH) and 3.8 $\times$ 10$^{-12}$ S cm$^{-1}$ (98% RH) at 25 °C, respectively (Figure 4 and Figure S8 (Supporting Information)). Considering that the framework structure of NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH is the same as that of ZIF-8, the observed enhancement in the ionic conductivity of 4 orders of magnitude can be attributed to the included salt. The ionic conductivity of NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH increases with RH, suggesting that the conductivity is not enhanced by the diffusion of aprotic NBu$_4^+$ ions but by the diffusion of hydrogen-bonding species of OH$^-$ ions. Therefore, we think that the structure of the adsorbed water molecules in NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH is strongly related to the ion-conducting pathways. We measured water vapor adsorption isotherms of ZIF-8 before and after the salt inclusion (Figure S9, Supporting Information) and found a remarkable difference between NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH and ZIF-8. NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH showed a larger amount of water adsorption, even though it has a smaller surface area. This means that the hydrophobic character of ZIF-8 becomes hydrophilic after the salt inclusion. We believe that both the electrostatic and hydrogen-bonding interactions derived from the included ions might play an important role in the adsorption of water molecules. We also found that NBu$_4$-ZIF-8 exhibits 1 order higher conductivity (6.2 $\times$ 10$^{-7}$ S cm$^{-1}$, 98% RH, 25 °C) in comparison with that of NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH, while both inclusion compounds contain almost identical amounts of NBu$_4^+$ ions. This clearly indicates that the ionic conductivity is mainly derived from the anionic species. A charge-migration model of hydrated OH$^-$ ions has been proposed as a transportation mechanism of OH$^-$ ions in water. Charge on the OH$^-$ ions migrates efficiently through proton transfer from neighboring water molecules through hydrogen-bonding networks, which is similar to the case of hydrated H$_2$O$^+$ ions (Grotthuss mechanism), as shown by the anomalously high mobility of OH$^-$ ions in aqueous solution in comparison with those of other anions. This indicates that the formation of hydrogen-bonding networks of OH$^-$ and water molecules can enhance the OH$^-$ ion conductivity. Therefore, we suppose that the increase in the conductivity of NBu$_4$-ZIF-8-OH with humidity occurs by such a migration of OH$^-$ ions in the pores of ZIF-8. However, the conducting mechanism of this material is still under investigation. The temperature dependence of the ionic conductivity, shown in the Arrhenius plot in the inset of Figure 4, gives an estimated activation energy $E_a$ of 0.70 eV. This $E_a$ value is much higher than that of hydrated OH$^-$ ions in liquid (less than 0.2 eV) and suggests that there are some unfavorable features in the conducting pathways (e.g., small apertures in ZIF-8 (3.4 Å in diameter)). Clarification of the relationship between the framework structure and the OH$^-$ ion conductivity in various MOFs is expected to provide further enhancement of the OH$^-$ ion conductivity in solids.

In summary, we have proposed a design for novel OH$^-$ ion conductive MOFs and have synthesized a novel MOF that includes OH$^-$ ions by employing salt inclusion in alkaline-stable MOFs. The hydroxide salts were successfully immobilized in ZIF-8, and the MOF has the capacity for OH$^-$ ion inclusion. This is the first example of an MOF including freely exchangeable OH$^-$ ions, which behave as carriers for ion conduction. We have demonstrated the potential of the salt inclusion to enhance ionic conductivity. Further, the chemical characteristics of the pores in ZIF-8 were controlled by the salt
inclusion successfully. We believe that this technique will be widely applicable to the functionalization of MOFs.

**ASSOCIATED CONTENT**

Supporting Information

Text, figures, tables, and a CIF file giving details of the syntheses, compound characterizations, physical measurements, and X-ray crystallographic data. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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**REFERENCES**


