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Kinetic Analysis of the Decomposition Reaction of CH₄ Injecting into Molten Slag

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Utilization of heat of slag is key technology for the reduction of CO₂ emission in steel industries. While hydrogen production is important for the society of aiming to the sustainable energy system, the green hydrogen must be produced for the actual CO₂ reduction.

In the present study, methane gas was injected into a molten slag and hydrogen was produced through the thermal decomposition reaction.

CH₄ = C + 2H₂

Kinetic analysis was performed using a graphite crucible both with empty and slag. The rate constants for the graphite crucible, k₉, and the slag, k₅, were obtained separately.

The rate constants for graphite surface and slag surface, k₉ and k₅, respectively, are as follows:

k₉ / cm·s⁻¹ = 41.74 x exp(51.741 / RT) ± 0.05

k₅ / cm·s⁻¹ = 4.053 x 10⁶ x exp(-190.310 / RT) ± 0.05

Using the obtained rate constants, the increase of the area of reaction surface during the CH₄ injection was estimated.

It was found that the slow soaking of the injecting lance could be utilized for the heat of molten slag. In addition, the slag shape can be a powder type through the injection of CH₄.

KEY WORDS: decomposition of CH₄; kinetic analysis; rate constant; molten slag; injecting of methane.

1. Introduction

Hydrogen is the secondary energy and some extent of CO₂ will be produced in a process of its production, more or less. A green hydrogen means that no CO₂ is exhausted on the way of production, and a black hydrogen means that same moles of CO₂ are exhausted. Between green and black, there is a gray hydrogen which is some extent of CO₂ exhausted.

Generally, most of hydrogen belongs to gray hydrogen and we should approach to the production of green hydrogen for actual CO₂ reduction.

The source of hydrogen would be the natural gas, biomass and water, while the energy of hydrogen production could be the atomic energy, natural energies and the waste heats in the industries. There are many kinds of waste heats existing in the steel industries and its utilization were investigated by many researchers in the research group “Science and Technologies for the Effective Use of Unrecovered Energy in Steelworks” of ISIJ (Iron and Steel Institute of Japan).¹⁻¹⁷

In the Research Group, the authors have studied on the heat recovery from slag using Rotary Cylinder Atomizing Method (RCAM).⁴⁻⁶ It is good method to get a fine spherical slag beads more than 200 μm. However, some of heat was lost during the atomizing process and it is difficult to find the way of utilization of spherical slag beads. It is necessary to develop the demand for spherical slag.

On the other hand, a gas injecting method can obtain the good contact between the gas and molten slag, which means that the efficiency of heat recovery from slag can be maximum, although it is depending on the size of bubble and its distribution. Furthermore, when methane gas could be used as a injecting gas, the reaction (1) occurs and hydrogen can be obtained. The meaning of this method is that the sensible heat of slag can be changed into a chemical energy by using an endothermic reaction.

CH₄ (g) → C + 2H₂ (g) ΔH°₂₉₈/KJmol⁻¹=74.6...(1)¹⁸

ΔG°/KJmol⁻¹=88.039–0.1079 T (573 K–1 773 K)....(2)¹⁸

Thermodynamically, the reaction (1) can occur from 816 K,
but kinetically, the reaction become dominant from 1 073 K without any catalyst. The decomposition reaction \( (1) \) is an endothermic one and the enthalpy change at 298 K is \( \Delta H_{298}^{\text{KJmol}^{-1}}=74.6 \). If a sensible heat of BF (blast furnace) slag in one ton from 1 773 K to 1 073 K could be used for the reaction \( (1) \), total heat was 275 Mcal,\(^{(19)}\) by which 8.5 kmol (190 Nm\(^3\)) of CH\(_4\) gas could be decomposed and 17 kmol (380 Nm\(^3\)) of H\(_2\) gas could be produced (the calculation was performed with the assumption: CH\(_4\) gas of 8.5 kmol at 298 K → H\(_2\) gas of 17 kmol and carbon of 8.5 kmol at 1 073 K). The amount of H\(_2\) corresponds to the one in COG (coke oven gas) evolved in the course of about 500 kg-coke production.

In this study, kinetics of CH\(_4\) decomposition during the injection into the slag melt was studied. To clarify the phenomena during injection, the reaction rates were measured through two separate experiments, the one was carried out by the graphite crucible (without slag) and the other was carried out by the graphite crucible having slag melt. From the kinetic analysis, the rate constants for the graphite surface and the slag surface were separated. Using the obtained rate constants, the decomposition reaction during injection into the slag melt was evaluated. It was found that the method of injection affected strongly on the area of reaction surface.

2. Experimental

2.1. Apparatus and Procedure

Figure 1 shows a schematics of experimental apparatus. Methane (CH\(_4\)) gas used is a high purity of 99.9% and an argon gas is an ultra high purity of 99.9999%. The flow rates of both gases were adjusted to a desired one by MFC (Mass Flow Controller), precisely. The total flow rate of Ar+CH\(_4\) mixture was 1 000 cm\(^3\)/min (STP), and the flow rate of CH\(_4\) was changed to two levels, 500 cm\(^3\)/min (STP) and 700 cm\(^3\)/min (STP) as shown in Table 1.

The reaction gas mixture was introduced into the reaction tube through the alumina lance (4 mmφ I.D. × 6 mmφ O.D., 600 mmL).

The slag sample was melted in a graphite crucible (33 mmφ I.D. × 46 mmφ O.D. × 90 mm Depth and 110 mm in height). The weight of slag was 74 g. When the slag was melted in the graphite crucible, the depth of slag melt was 3 cm.

The graphite crucible having slag sample was heated by an induction furnace with 15 kW and 40 kHz. The sample and graphite crucible were set in the quartz reaction tube which was sealed with water cooled aluminum gas tight caps in both ends. Temperature of the sample was measured by B-type (Pt-6Rh, Pt-30Rh) thermocouple which was located at the bottom of graphite crucible.

All experiments were heating up to a given temperature (Table 1) under Ar atmosphere, when the alumina lance was located 5 mm from slag surface. On the other hand, the reaction gas (Ar+CH\(_4\) mixture) was adjusted to a desired composition in a by-pass (Fig. 1) and a calibration of QMS (quadrupole mass spectrometer) was performed, simultaneously. The details of QMS calibration was mentioned below.

When the calibration was done, and the temperature and the flow rate became stable, the argon gas for purge was stopped and the reaction gas mixture was introduced to reaction tube. Almost at the same time, the gas blowing lance was immersed into slag melt. The position of end of lance was located about 5 mm from the bottom of crucible.

The downward velocity of lance affects the result of injection significantly. There are two downward velocities selected in this experiment. One is 0.6 cm/s which means a quick soaking of lance and actually the lance is moved from the surface of slag to bottom of crucible about 3 cm within 5 s, the other is slow soaking and about 0.03 cm/s, which means that the lance was moved stepwise for 0.5 cm in every 15 s.

2.2. Gas Analysis Using QMS (Quadrupole Mass Spectrometer)

QMS (ThermoStar produced by Pfeiffer Vacuum GmbH) was used for the quantification analysis of gases. Recently, a software for the gas quantification is prepared in the respective system, however in this experiment, the quantification method was adopted as shown in below.\(^{(20)}\)

Quantification analysis using QMS is relatively difficult, because the condition around the quadrupole in a analysis tube, where is under high vacuum, is varied by the gas composition and the amount of gas introduced. The adsorbed gases inside the analysis tube affects the total pressure, which has large effect on the intensities. Furthermore, the amount of the adsorbed gases is also varied with the kind of gases. Since the QMS has quite high sensitivity until the order of ppb, the establishment of the quantification method can be helpful for a gas related experiment. The usage of inert dilute gas (argon), which is always constant flow rate, can cancel these disadvantages of QMS. Although the intensities are varied with the total pressure, the objective intensities can be available through the normalization by the argon intensity. Fundamental equation is expressed by Eq. (3),

\[
\frac{I_i}{I_{Ar}} = a_i + \sum \frac{b_j V_j}{V_{Ar}} \tag{3}
\]
where, \( I \) and \( V \) mean the intensity of QMS and flow rate (cm\(^3\)/min (STP)), respectively. The subscript means the gases related. \( a \) and \( b \) are coefficients for determining the calibration curve. According to the kinds of gas, the existence of fragment peak must be taken into account to the calibration curve.

For example, in the case of Ar–CO–CO\(_2\) system, CO\(_2\) makes a fragment of CO gas, which will disturb the analysis of CO gas. Equation (3) can formulate as Eq. (4).

\[
\frac{I_{CO}}{I_{Ar}} = a_{CO2} + b_{CO2} \frac{V_{CO2}}{V_{Ar}} + b_{CO} \frac{V_{CO}}{V_{Ar}} \quad \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots (4)
\]

In this experiment, \( \text{H}_2 \) could be a fragment peak of \( \text{CH}_4 \). However, the fragment peak from \( \text{CH}_4 \) can minimize, when an adequate analyzing condition such as a ionization voltage and emission current are selected. The examples of fragment peaks by QMS are shown in Fig. 2 in comparison with the different gas flowing path. In Fig. 2(a), result of QMS is shown, when the gas mixture (Ar+\( \text{CH}_4 \)) was flowed to the ‘by-path’. On the other hand, in Figs. 2(b) and 2(c), the gas mixture was introduced into the reaction tube in which the slag was already melted at 1500°C. The decomposition reaction of \( \text{CH}_4 \) expressed by Eq. (1) must occur and hydrogen evolved. In Fig. 2(a), there is no \( \text{H}_2 \) peak observed, because the conditions (Emission current: 1.0 mA, Applied Voltage for MCP (Multi Channel Plate): 600 V) of QMS analysis were adequately selected. The other fragments, \( \text{CH}^+, \text{CH}_2^+, \text{CH}_3^+ \) come from \( \text{CH}_4 \) and \( \text{Ar}^{++} \) come from \( \text{Ar} \). Those fragments form in ion-chamber of QMS device by a collision with electrons, however, the existence of those fragments does not disturb the quantification analysis of \( \text{CH}_4 \) and \( \text{H}_2 \). When the gas mixture is introduced to the reaction tube, the decomposition reaction was promoted and \( \text{H}_2^+ \) corresponding to \( \text{H}_2 \) generation was detected. The other peaks (\( \text{C}_2\text{H}_2^+, \text{C}_2\text{H}_4^+ \)) related to \( \text{C}_2 \) compounds were negligible as shown in Figs. 2(b) and 2(c).

The obtained calibration lines for \( \text{H}_2 \) and \( \text{CH}_4 \) are shown in Fig. 3. The error of analysis was \( \pm 0.5\% \) for \( \text{H}_2 \) and \( \pm 1.0\% \) for \( \text{CH}_4 \). These calibration lines were measure in every experiments, because the condition of analysis tube of QMS would change gradually with time.

2.3. Slag Sample

Slag sample is BF (blast furnace) slag which is water quenched (water granular) slag. The chemical composition of the slag is shown in Table 2. The basicity (C/S=CaO/SiO\(_2\)) is 1.28 and the content of MgO is 6.28 mass%. As mentioned above, the weight of slag is 74 g and the volume of melt is 25.65 cm\(^3\). The density of slag melt is 2.88 g/cm\(^3\).

2.4. Kind of Experiment

In this study, experiments are classified into three groups.
(i) EXP-1: Injection into slag melt  
(ii) EXP-2: Blowing into the empty graphite crucible  
(iii) EXP-3: Blowing into the graphite crucible with slag  
Main experiment is the injection experiment, hereinafter, it is called as EXP-1 for convenience. The lance for injection is a single hole alumina tube and the inner diameter is 4 mm. The size and number of hole in lance is important, because the size of bubble, which is related to the total surface area of reaction, can be decided by the property of hole. In this study, the number of hole in lance was fixed to a single one. The lance was waiting at 5 mm over slag surface before injection, then, the lance was moved downward into the slag. Since the downward velocity is also important factor to affect the injection behavior, it was changed in two levels. Two kind of injection experiment are carried out as follows:  
(i-1) EXP-1-1: lance downward velocity is 8.3 mm/s (moving 25 mm in 3 s).  
(i-2) EXP-1-2: lance downward velocity is 0.33 mm/s (moving 25 mm in 75 s).  

The reaction is a large endothermic one which would solidify the slag rapidly, so that the lance velocity affect the rising behavior of gas bubbles accompanied with the solidification of slag. Moreover, the reaction will also occur in the inner surface of graphite crucible, slag surface and inner surface of bubble as shown in Fig. 4. It is necessary to distinguish the reaction rate among three different surfaces. However, in this study, it was assumed that the reaction rate between slag surface and inner surface of bubble in slag was almost the same. Then, the fundamental experiments to distinguish the reaction rates between graphite surface and slag surface have been performed using two different crucibles as shown in Fig. 5. Figure 5(a) shows a graphite crucible without slag by which the reaction rate on the graphite surface can be measured (EXP-2). The area of reaction surface of graphite crucible is $A_G$ (101.86 cm²). The end position of alumina lance is 5 mm from the bottom of graphite crucible. Figure 5(b) shows a graphite crucible with slag, by which the reaction rates for the graphite surface and the one for slag surface are obtained (EXP-3). The area of graphite surface is 62.2 cm² and the slag surface is 8.55 cm². The end position of alumina lance is 5 mm from the surface of slag melt.  

From the result of EXP-3, a mixed reaction rates between the graphite surface and slag surface will be obtained. Then, using the result of EXP-2, the single rate of slag surface can be estimated.  

3. Results and Discussion  
3.1. Fundamental Experiment  
Figures 6(a) and 6(b) show the typical results of EXP-2 and EXP-3, respectively. When the reaction gas was introduced to the reaction tube, CH₄ quickly decreased and H₂ gas increased. As there was relatively large dead space, some evolved H₂ gas stagnated in the dead space. From this reason, it took a long time to substitute completely as shown by the region indicated by hatching. According to the endothermic reaction of CH₄ decomposition, temperature started to decrease and showed a given constant value, when the reaction became steady state. Figure 7 shows the temperature decrease from initial temperature to the end of experiment (Final Tempe.). From Fig. 7, the decrease of temperature become large in high temperature in accordance with the increase of reaction rate. For example, the temperature decrease was about 90 K at 1 600 K and almost negligible at 1 073 K. In the case of the kinetic analysis, the final temperature, at which the reaction reached to the steady state, was used.  

At the end of experiment, the reaction gas was changed to the by-path and the reaction was stopped. As shown in Fig. 6, the CH₄ gas was quickly returned to the initial flow rate and H₂ gas went to zero. 

The decomposed CH₄, $V_{CH₄}^d$ (Ncm³/min) was calculated by Eq. (8).  
\[ V_{CH₄}^d = V_{CH₄}^i - V_{CH₄}^o \quad \text{.................. (8)} \]  
where $V_{CH₄}^i$ and $V_{CH₄}^o$ are inlet and outlet flow rate (Ncm³/min) of CH₄, respectively.  

The decomposed CH₄ flow rate obtained, $V_{CH₄}^d$, were plotted in Fig. 8. Results of EXP-2 (graphite crucible without slag) are shown by●, ○ and ▲, while results of EXP-3 are shown by ○, ▼ and □. The marks of ●, ○, ▲ and ▼
correspond to the flow rate of 500 Ncm$^3$/min. ▲ and ■ correspond to 700 Ncm$^3$/min. In the higher temperature range more than 1 540 K and 500 Ncm$^3$/min (○ and ●), the reaction gas CH$_4$ was completely consumed and the reaction did not in the steady state, which was expressed by the broken line in Fig. 8. Then the experiments with higher flow rate of 700 Ncm$^3$/min were performed and the results were plotted with ▲ and ■.

Decomposition reaction gradually became dominant from about 1 240 K both in EXP-2 and EXP-3. However, the apparent decomposition rate $V'_{CH_4}$ in EXP-2 (graphite crucible) was higher than that of EXP-3 (graphite crucible with slag) in the temperature range higher than 1 300 K. The result was simply caused by the difference of reaction surface area. As shown in Fig. 5, the area of reaction surface in EXP-2 (graphite crucible), $A_G$ is 101.86 cm$^2$, while the area in EXP-3 (graphite crucible with slag) is 70.75 cm$^2$ ($A_G$=62.20 cm$^2$, $A_S$=8.55 cm$^2$). The simple calculation of the apparent reaction rate for EXP-2 is about 1.5 times higher than that of EXP-3.

In the case of EXP-3, the apparent decomposition rate $V'_{CH_4}$ increased from about 1 540 K, from which the slag would start to melt. All these temperatures are adopted at end of experiment as mentioned above (Fig. 7), because the kinetic analyses were performed with the temperature under the steady state. Initial temperatures must be higher than the ones shown in Fig. 8. When the temperature of EXP-3 was 1 540 K at the end of experiment, the initial temperature was 1 640 K which was closed to the melting point of the slag used.$^{22}$ This result means that the CH$_4$ decomposition enhanced by the existence of slag melt. The details must be discussed after the kinetic analysis below.

### 3.2. Kinetic Analysis

Using the results of EXP-2 and EXP-3, kinetic analysis was performed and the rate constants for the graphite surface, $k_G$ and for the slag surface, $k_S$ were determined.

Assuming the first order reaction, the rate equation of decomposition reaction can be expressed by Eq. (9).

$$ r = Ak\left(C'_{CH_4} - C_{CH_4}^e\right) \quad \text{(9)} $$

where, $r$ is the reaction rate (mol/s), $k$ is the rate constant (cm/s) and $A$ is the reaction surface area. $C'_{CH_4}$ and $C_{CH_4}^e$ are the concentration of methane in the initial reaction gas (mol/cm$^3$) and the concentration at equilibrium obtained by Eq. (1), respectively. The concentrations of methane are determined by Eqs. (10) and (11),

$$ C_{CH_4}^i = \frac{P_{CH_4}^i}{R \cdot T} \quad \text{(10)} $$

$$ C_{CH_4}^e = \frac{P_{CH_4}^e}{R \cdot T} \quad \text{(11)} $$

where $P_{CH_4}^i$ can be obtained using the experimental flow rate $V'_{CH_4}$, $V_A$ by Eqs. (12) and (13).

$$ V'_{CH_4} + V_A = V_r \quad \text{(12)} $$
Then, $\Delta G^0$ be obtained by Eq. (17), where $G=-\Delta G^0$ was obtained using thermochemical data base.\(^{18}\) Since the total hydrogen content is not change before and after the reaction, Eq. (16) can be established.

$$\Delta G^0 = -\frac{RT}{P_{CH_2}} \left( \frac{P_{CH_4}^e}{P_{CH_2}^e} \right)^2 \quad \text{.......................... (14)}$$

$$\Delta G^0 = 88.039 - 0.10789 T \quad [\text{kJ/mol}] \quad \text{............ (15)}$$

where $P_{CH_2}^e$ and $P_{CH_4}^e$ are equilibrium partial pressure of methane and hydrogen, respectively. The temperature dependence of $\Delta G^0$ was obtained using thermochemical data base.\(^{18}\) Since the total hydrogen content is not change before and after the reaction, Eq. (16) can be established.

$$2V_{CH_4} = 2V_{CH_2} + V_{H_2} \quad \text{........................................ (16a)}$$

$$P_{CH_4}^e = \frac{V_{CH_4}^e}{V_T}, \quad P_{CH_2}^e = \frac{V_{CH_2}^e}{V_T} \quad \text{.................. (16b, c)}$$

where

$$V_T = V_{Ar} + V_{CH_4}^e + V_{H_2}^e \quad \text{.................. (16d)}$$

Then, $V_{CH_4}^e$ can be obtained by Eq. (17),

$$V_{CH_4}^e = \frac{(2V_{CH_4}^e + V_{H_2}^e) \pm \sqrt{(2V_{CH_4}^e + V_{H_2}^e)^2 - 4(2V_{CH_4}^e)^2}}{2} \quad \text{.......................... (17)}$$

where $G_0 = \exp(-\Delta G^0/RT)$ from Eq. (14), and the hydrogen in equilibrium can be obtained by the mass balance of hydrogen, $V_{H_2}^e = 2V_{CH_4}^e - 2V_{CH_2}^e$, $P_{CH_2}^e$, obtained by Eq. (16b) are shown in Fig. 9 for the conditions of $P_{CH_2}^e = 0.5$ (500 cm$^3$/min (STP)) and $P_{CH_4}^e = 0.7$ (700 cm$^3$/min (STP)). In the low temperature range from 1 100 K to 1 300 K, the equilibrium partial pressures of CH$_4$ are relatively high and from about 0.15 to 0.02. However, it is very low in the higher temperature range and can be negligible more than 1 500 K.

In the case of graphite crucible, EXP-2, the reaction equation can be written by Eq. (18),

$$r = A_G k_G (C_{CH_4}^e - C_{CH_2}^e) \quad \text{.......................... (18)}$$

While, in the case of EXP-3 for the graphite crucible with slag, the reaction equation is Eq. (19),

$$r = A_G k_G (C_{CH_4}^e - C_{CH_2}^e) + A_S k_S (C_{CH_4}^e - C_{CH_2}^e) \quad \text{.......................... (19)}$$

Equation (19) can be rewritten as follows:

$$r = k'(C_{CH_4}^e - C_{CH_2}^e) \quad \text{.......................... (20)}$$

where $k' = A_G k_G + A_S k_S$. Since the $k'$ and $k_G$ can be obtained by EXP-3 and EXP-2, respectively, $k_S$ can be estimated. The obtained $k_G$ and $k_S$ are expressed by Eqs. (21) and (22), respectively, and plotted in Fig. 10. The linear relationships of temperature dependence for $k_G$ and $k_S$ for the different gas flow rate are obtained. The activation energy of $k_G$ is 51 kJ/mol and the one of $k_S$ is 190 kJ/mol, which is extremely high value. Below 1 450 K (1 177°C), $k_S$ is lower than $k_G$. However, in the higher temperature region, $k_S$ become higher value than $k_G$, which is corresponding to the phenomena of slag softening and melting. At 1 680 K, the value of $k_S$ is about 4.77 times larger than $k_G$. The mechanism of enhancement of CH$_4$ decomposition by molten slag was discussed below.

$$k_G / \text{cm} \cdot \text{s}^{-1} = 41.74 \times \exp \left( -\frac{51 741}{RT} \right) \pm 0.05 \quad \text{.......................... (21)}$$

$$k_S / \text{cm} \cdot \text{s}^{-1} = 4.053 \times 10^6 \times \exp \left( -\frac{190 310}{RT} \right) \pm 0.05 \quad \text{.......................... (22)}$$

3.3. Mechanism of CH$_4$ Decomposition and Effect of Molten Slag

There are many reviews and papers related to the CH$_4$ decomposition\(^{23–27}\) and the kinetic database is available on the WEB site of NIST (National Institute of Standard and Technology).\(^{23}\) The elementary reactions of decomposition of CH$_4$ are considered as follows:

$$\text{CH}_4 \rightleftharpoons \text{CH}_3^* + \text{H}^*, \quad \text{Ea}=264–430 \text{ kJ} \quad \text{......... (23)}$$

$$\text{CH}_3^* \rightleftharpoons \text{CH}_2^* + \text{H}^*, \quad \text{Ea}=352–383 \text{ kJ} \quad \text{......... (24)}$$

$$\text{CH}_2^* \rightleftharpoons \text{CH}^* + \text{H}^*, \quad \text{Ea}=348–375 \text{ kJ} \quad \text{......... (25)}$$

$$\text{CH}^* \rightleftharpoons \text{C}^* + \text{H}^*, \quad \text{Ea}=280 \text{ kJ} \quad \text{......... (26)}$$

where the superscript '*' means a radical state of species.
Then, the reactions with radical hydrogen H* are as follows:

$\text{CH}_4 + \text{H}^* \rightleftharpoons \text{CH}_3^* + \text{H}_2, \quad \text{Ea} = 45 \sim 60 \text{ kJ} \quad \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots (27)$

$\text{CH}_3^* + \text{H}^* \rightleftharpoons \text{CH}_2^* + \text{H}_2, \quad \text{Ea} = 63 \text{ kJ} \quad \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots (28)$

$\text{CH}_2^* + \text{H}^* \rightleftharpoons \text{CH}^* + \text{H}_2, \quad \text{Ea} = -5.6 \sim -7.48 \text{ kJ} \quad \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots (29)$

$\text{CH}^* + \text{H}^* \rightleftharpoons \text{C}^* + \text{H}_2, \quad \text{Ea} = 0.67 \text{ kJ} \quad \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots (30)$

Actually, much soot precipitated in the experiment.

$n\text{C}^* \rightleftharpoons \text{C}_n \text{(soot)} \quad \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots (31)$

The rate constants $k$ are expressed by Eq. (32).

$k(T) = A \exp\left(-\frac{\text{Ea}}{RT}\right) \quad \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots (32)$

where ‘$A$’ is a Frequency factor and ‘Ea’ is an activation energy.

The unit of $k$ is cm$^3$ molecule$^{-1}$ s$^{-1}$. All values are obtained from NIST database.$^{21}$ In the present study, the activation energies, Ea (kJ/mol) were compared with the ones obtained in this experiment, because the unit of rate constant $k$ (cm$^3$ molecule$^{-1}$ s$^{-1}$) was different from the present experiment $k$ (cm/s).

The activation energy, 51.7 kJ for graphite crucible is excellent agreement with the one for Eq. (27). J. W. Sutherland et al.$^{28}$ has shown the activation energy, 57 kJ for the reaction $\text{CH}_4 + \text{H}^* \rightleftharpoons \text{CH}_3^* + \text{H}_2$ (Eq. (27)) and the Arrhenius type equation was expressed by Eq. (33).

$k_1 = 2.935 \times 10^{-19} \exp(-6.934/T) \quad \text{cm}^3 \text{ molecule}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1} \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots (33)^{28}$

Furthermore, the thermodynamic equilibrium constant $K_{1,2} = k_1/k_2$, where $k_1$ is the rate constant of forward reaction and $k_2$ is backward reaction for Eq. (27), was shown by Sutherland.$^{28}$

$K_{1,2} = 39.514 - 2.7804 \times 10^{8}T^{-1} + 7.9684 \times 10^{5}T^{-2} - 8.2897 \times 10^{6}T^{-3} \quad (800 \leq T \leq 2000 \text{ K}) \quad \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots (34)^{28}$

Using the equilibrium constant $K_{1,2}$, non-linear rate constant $k_1$ was shown by them.

$k_1 = 6.78 \times 10^{-21}T^{1.156} \exp(-4.406/T) \quad \text{cm}^3 \text{ molecule}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1} \quad \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots (35)^{28}$

The apparent activation energy of Eq. (35) for the reaction type of Eq. (33) is 69 kJ, which is relatively higher than that of the present value, however, it is within the range of error.

On the other hand, the rate constant for slag, $k_S$ is very high in the high temperature range from 1450 K to 1700 K in which the slag is melted. The activation energy of $k_S$ is also very high and 190 kJ. However, the activation energies for Eqs. (23)–(26) are 280 kJ to 380 kJ, which are extremely higher than that in this experiment. The reaction mechanism of CH$_4$ decomposition in the existence of slag melt should be different from ordinary decomposition reaction (Eqs. (23)–(30)). In this study, the reaction mechanism of CH$_4$ decomposition in cooperation with slag melt was considered as shown in Fig. 11. After experiment, the surface of slag was observed (Fig. 11(b)). There was a smaller circle on the surface where the reaction gas from alumina lance was impinging. The surface in the center circle was depressed by the pressure of gas. Moreover, the periphery of the center circle showed a shape of valley, to which a reaction mechanism of gas evolution might be related. In addition, the position of meniscus between graphite crucible and slag surface has little carbon film, while most of the slag surface was covered with carbon film. If the carbon film on the slag surface provided the reaction sites for the decomposition of CH$_4$, the effective slag surface would be changed by the formation of carbon film. However, the obtained rate constants of $k_G$ and $k_S$ showed the linear nature on the reaction temperature under the assumption of constant surface areas for graphite and slag, so that the carbon film formed would not affect the decomposition reaction of CH$_4$ actually.

From these results, the elementary reactions of the CH$_4$ decomposition on the surface of molten slag are considered as follows:

$\text{CH}_4 \rightleftharpoons \text{CH}_4 \text{(ad)} \quad \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots (36)$

$\text{CH}_4 \text{(ad)} \rightleftharpoons \text{C(ad)} + 4\text{H (ad)} \quad \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots (37)$

$\text{H (ad)} \rightleftharpoons \text{H (in slag)} \quad \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots (38)$

$2\text{H (in slag)} \rightleftharpoons \text{H}_2 \text{(g)} \quad \cdots \cdots \cdots \cdots (39)$

where ‘ad’ means the state of adsorption on the surface of slag, and the under-line means the state of dissolution in slag. At first, the CH$_4$ gas adsorbed on the surface of slag
melt as expressed by Eq. (36). Then, the CH₄ decomposes into C (ad) and H (ad) (Eq. (37)), simultaneously, the H (ad) dissolve into slag melt (Eq. (38)) as a H (in slag) which is a kind of radical species. Equation (37) is an endothermic reaction, while Eq. (39) is an exothermic one. As shown in Fig. 11, there must be a temperature distribution in the slag and the center of crucible is lower than that of the periphery of crucible. Since Eq. (39) is an exothermic reaction, H₂ gas evolution might occur at the center of crucible. However, the center of slag surface is pressurized by the gas from lance. Then, the position of H₂ generation (Eq. (39)) might occur at the periphery of center circle as shown in Fig. 11(a).

The solubility of hydrogen in slag is not so high, but it is the thermally activated process and temperature dependence must be high. J-Y. Park, et al.²⁹ reported that the activation energy of hydrogen dissolution is 177 kJ, while the one in this study is 190 kJ which is in good agreement with the data of Park, et al. The reaction mechanism of CH₄ decomposition is evidently different between the graphite surface and the slag melt. The reaction in cooperation with slag melt must relate to the phenomena with the hydrogen dissolution into slag.

3.4. Results of CH₄ Injection into Molten Slag

As mentioned above, the injection experiments are classified into two kinds. One is the quick soaking of lance of EXP-1-1, and the other is the slow soaking of lance of EXP-1-2. The downward velocity of lance affected the amount of reaction and the solidification behavior of slag through the endothermic reaction. Finally, the path of gas raising was quite different from the lance velocity.

(1) Quick soaking of lance (EXP-1-1)

Injection experiment with quick soaking of lance was carried out. The results are shown in Fig. 12. When the reaction gas was introduced in the reaction tube, which is not yet injecting, hydrogen increased quickly from the decomposition reaction of CH₄. About 1 100 s, the lance was soaked quickly with the velocity of above mentioned. However, the rate of reaction did not increase, as shown in Fig. 12. The flow rate of CH₄ increased oppositely and H₂ decreased in accordance with the injection. After experiment, the solidified sample was taken out and the cross section was observed. The result is shown in Fig. 13 in comparison with the illustration of a channel formed in the slag. In this case, since the reaction occurred rapidly in the bubbles, the solidification of slag around bubbles might occur. These solidified slag bubbles would ascending and broken at the top surface of slag and accumulated³⁰ (Fig. 13). The mechanism was illustrated in Fig. 14. In the slag, there was a channel of gas ascending and the most of slag remained in the crucible, whose sensible heat was not used for the decomposition reaction. These situations of slag, where the reaction surface was limited by the formation of channel, caused the decrease of the rate of reaction as shown in Fig. 12.

(2) Slow soaking of lance (EXP-1-2)

From the result of EXP-1-1, it was found that the formation of channel in the slag disturbed the decomposition reaction, because the reaction surface was limited by the channel formation. In this experiment, the formation of channel was inhibited by the experiment of slow soaking of lance (EXP-1-2). The results of experiment are shown in Fig. 15. When the injection started, a scattering of hydrogen evolution partly occurred, however, the average evolution of hydrogen did not decrease and most of CH₄ was constantly decomposed during injection.

During injection, the temperature decreased from 1 730 K to 1 650 K. From this decrease of temperature, the rate constant of ks would decrease from 7.27 to 3.38, to which the reaction rate would become a half value. If the rate of react-

![Image](image_url)
tion in this system was decided by only temperature, the reaction rate observed must decrease. In this study, it was considered that the apparent reaction rate during injection was resulted from the increase in total surface of reaction caused by the injection. As shown in above section, the decomposition reaction occurred in the bubble and the slag around the bubbles solidified, and then, the slag bubbles were accumulated in the top of molten slag. This phenomenon increases the reaction surface significantly. So that the area of reaction surface in the slag, $A_S$, was estimated during the injection using Eq. (40), where $k''$ means the apparent reaction rate during injection of CH$_4$ into molten slag, and $A_G$, $k_G$ and $k_S$ can use the original values obtained in the fundamental experiments (EXP-2 and EXP-3).

$$k'' = A_G k_G + A_S k_S.$$  \hspace{1cm} (40)

Then, the actual increase of $A_S$ obtained are shown in Fig. 16.

Original surface area of slag is 8.55 cm$^2$ (Fig. 5). On the other hand, the surface area at the starting of injection (700 s) was about 14 cm$^2$. The surface area increased continuously and was about 25 cm$^2$ at the end of injection.

In Fig. 17, the injection mechanism for the slow soaking of lance and the cross section of slag sample after experiment were shown. As mentioned above, the bubble ascending to the top of surface, on which some solidified slag layer was attached, would be broken and the slag layer also broken (Fig. 14). In the case of the slow soaking of lance, the slag was foamed near the surface and soon broken (Fig. 17(a)). From this reason, the depth of bubbling will be kept constant. The broken bubbles including a carbon film and slag layer are accumulated in the top of molten slag. This mechanism might be available for making the fine slag production. Figure 17(b) shows the cross section of slag sample after experiment. Although some slag remained in the bottom of crucible, most of slag was foamed and became a powder state (some of fine slag was lost during cutting procedure of the crucible).

It is interesting to focus on the morphology of carbon formed during the injection. Two kinds of carbon were formed. The one was a film type carbon having highly crystallized one which was formed inside the bubble. The other was a soot type carbon which was observed precisely by TEM (transmission electron microscope). The details will be published in the separate paper.

4. Conclusions

The CH$_4$ injection experiments into molten slag were carried out and the thermal decomposition reaction CH$_4$ was investigated.

$$\text{CH}_4 (\text{g}) = \text{C} + 2\text{H}_2 (\text{g})$$

In the fundamental experiments, kinetic analysis was performed using an empty graphite crucible and a one with slag. The rate constants for the graphite crucible, $k_G$ and the slag, $k_S$, were obtained separately. Using the obtained rate constants, a kinetic analysis on the injection experiment was carried out. The results obtained are as follows:

(1) The rate constants for graphite surface and slag surface, $k_G$ and $k_S$, respectively, as follows:

$$k_G \text{ / cm} \cdot \text{s}^{-1} = 41.74 \times \exp \left( \frac{-51741}{RT} \right) \pm 0.05$$

$$k_S \text{ / cm} \cdot \text{s}^{-1} = 4.053 \times 10^6 \times \exp \left( \frac{-190310}{RT} \right) \pm 0.05$$
(2) The CH$_4$ decomposition enhanced by the existence of slag melt. The mechanism of enhancement of CH$_4$ decomposition by slag melt was presented, in which a absorption and desorption of a radical hydrogen (H*) promoted the decomposition of CH$_4$.

(3) It was found that the slow soaking of the injection lance could be utilized for heat recovery of molten slag, efficiently. Moreover, the slag became a powder or flake like by the slow soaking of injection lance.

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