

increases steadily to values greater than 3.0.

Source Type

(i) Based on Steranes

Algal organic matter contains steranes in which the C27 compounds are more abundant than the C29 compounds. General aquatic organic matter has approximately equivalent amounts of the C27 and C29 compounds while organic matter rich in land-plants usually has a lot more of the C29 steranes.

(ii) Based on Triterpanes

The triterpane components in petroleum can be derived from both bacteria and higher plants. The common bacterial products are the C27-C35 hopanes and moretanes whereas the higher plant triterpanes are compounds other than hopanes or moretanes and are commonly C30 compounds.

(iii) Based on Diasteranes

The diasteranes are not produced biologically but are formed during early diagenesis from sterane precursors. The diasterane ratios

$$\frac{C27(20R)}{C29(20R)} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{C27(20R+20S)}{C29(20R+20S)}$$

should reflect the nature of the organic matter in the same manner as that outlined above for the steranes.

Biodegradation

It has been observed that in severely biodegraded petroleum the series of normal hopanes are converted to a series of A ring demethylated hopanes and the C29 (20R) sterane is selectively removed. For altered crudes which have not been degraded to this extent the severity of biodegradation can often be gauged by studying the isoprenoid and aromatic fractions. However, this type of investigation extends beyond a standard GC/MS/DS analysis.

Correlation

Our present approach to oil:oil or oil:source rock correlation problems is as follows:

- (i) Compare the distribution of compounds in the 123, 177, 191, 205, 217, 218, 231 and 259 mass fragmentograms for an oil or sediment extract to the distribution of compounds in the respective fragmentograms for the other oil(s) or sediment extract(s). It is necessary in this type of comparison to make allowance for small variations due to possible maturity differences.
- (ii) Examine the fragmentograms for peaks or sets of peaks which may represent compounds that are specific to the geological system under investigation. Normal steranes, diasteranes and bacterial hopanes cannot be used for this purpose because they are present in virtually all crude oils and sediment extracts. However, compounds like higher plant triterpanes, bisnorhopane and botryococcane can often prove very useful for this purpose.