

Carbon isotope analysis is most commonly used to identify the source of methane according to the following criteria (Fuex 1977):

$\delta^{13}\text{C}$ ‰ PDB

-75 to -55	Biogenic methane
-58 to -40	Methane associated with oil
-40 to -25	Thermal methane

Source rock-crude oil correlations have been attempted by observing the change in $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ values of components of oils and rocks (Stahl 1977). Source rock extracts are usually isotopically heavier than the corresponding crude oil but are lighter than the asphaltenes of the oil and the kerogen of the rock (Hunt 1979). It has also been observed that marine organic carbon is generally isotopically heavier than contemporaneous terrestrial organic carbon (Tissot & Welte 1978). However, it should be noted that increasing maturity and biodegradation produce a shift toward heavier isotope values.

2.3.5 Gas Chromatography - Mass Spectrometry (GC/MS)

GC/MS analysis is normally performed on the branched and cyclic alkane fraction and/or the aromatic fraction of oils, condensates and sediment extracts. The specific fraction is first isolated and then injected into a gas chromatograph which is linked in series with a mass spectrometer. As compounds are eluted from the chromatography column they are bombarded with high energy electrons. This causes them to fragment into a number of ions each with a molecular weight less than that of the parent molecule. Individual compounds give a characteristic fragmentation pattern (mass spectrum), the major ions of which are presented in a series of mass fragmentograms [ie. plots of ion concentration against GC retention time].

GC/MS analysis can be carried out using one of the following modes of operation:

- (i) Acquire mode - in which all ions (within a broad range) in each mass spectrum are memorised by the data system.
- (ii) Selective Ion Monitoring (SIM) mode - in which only selected ions of interest are memorised by the data system.

2.3.5.1 GC/MS Analysis of Branched/Cyclic Alkanes

The group of compounds to be analysed is first isolated from the saturate fraction by refluxing the sample with activated 5Å molecular sieves in cyclohexane for 24 hours. Branched/cyclic alkanes, including alkylcyclohexanes, are recovered from the solvent by fractional distillation.

For condensates, and samples where information about alkylcyclohexanes is not required, the saturate fraction is passed through a small column packed with silicalite adsorbent. The branched/cyclic alkanes are recovered from the eluting solvent by fractional distillation.