Title	Sedimentation of binary colloids : Brazil nuts and icebergs(Poster session 1, New Frontiers in Colloidal Physics : A Bridge between Micro- and Macroscopic Concepts in Soft Matter)
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Citation	物性研究 (2007), 89(1): 71-71
Issue Date	2007-10-20
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/2433/110940
Right	
Type	Departmental Bulletin Paper
Textversion	publisher

Sedimentation of binary colloids: Brazil nuts and icebergs

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The hard sphere is *the* basic system of statistical mechanics, widely investigated but still rich of unknown phenomenon. We use binary colloidal solutions as a good approximation for binary hard-sphere mixtures [1]. And colloids are sufficiently large to be distinguished to single particle resolution by confocal microscopy. We focus on a system with majority species being smaller than the minority species by a factor 2.

Experimental observations lead us to think about a yet unconsidered [2] binary fluid + one component crystal equilibrium, the crystal being made of the majority species. Taking this phase coexistence as a hypothesis, we study theoretically [3] the phase behavior and the sedimentation [4] of our colloid mixture.

Going further, we also investigate experimentally the sedimentation of the same colloidal solution with added non adsorbing polymers. The depletion interaction between colloids (Asakura Oosawa potential) [5] [6] induced by the polymers leads to a wealth of phases and sedimentation behaviors not yet fully explained.

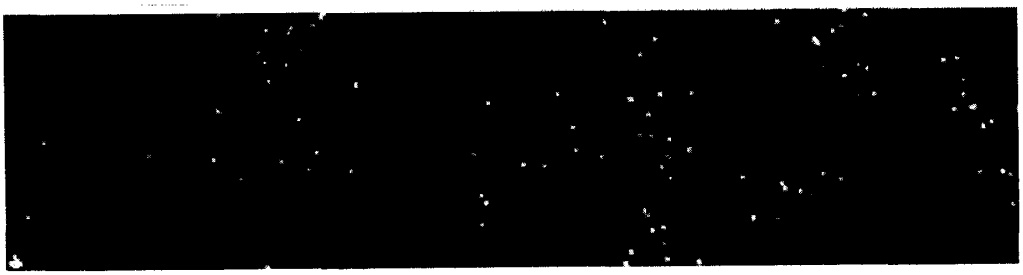

Figure 1: binary fluid + one component crystal

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