CHEMICAL COMPOSITION OF DRAINAGE WATER AROUND KOTA KINABALU CITY CENTRE AREA; AMMONIA, NITRATE AND NITRITE

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PERPUSTAKAAN

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE WITH HONOURS

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE PROGRAM SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

APRIL 2007



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I declare that this dissertation is my own product except for the statement where each has been cited.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the composition of ammonia, nitrite and nitrate nitrogen in six locations around Kota Kinabalu city centre. This was achieved using the phenate method, hach kit and phenol disulphonic method, pH, dissolved oxygen and conductivity were determined in-situ. Samples were taken on two separate days for each location. Ammonia nitrogen was found to be in the range of 2.25-30.50 mgl⁻¹; nitrite 0.006-0.225 mgl⁻¹ and nitrate 7.50- 121.46 mgl⁻¹ respectively. Observations suggested that location with relatively higher variability and intensity of activities are likely to have higher content of ammonia nitrogen in its drainage water. The water retention capacity in the occupied drain might have contributed to high ammonia content as well. High nitrate concentration in certain locations could be due to the accumulation of this compound after nitrification; nitrate being the end-product of this process. Study on the effect of sampling distance sampled at four sub-locations along the Api-api large drain showed a gradual decline of the nitrogen compounds downstream, which might be due to dilution or chemical conversion of inorganic nitrogen into organic nitrogen. This study also found that there is a significant inverse relationship (p = -0.943) between nitrate and pH.



KOMPOSISI KIMIA AIR LONGKANG DI KAWASAN SEKITAR PUSAT BANDARAYA KOTA KINABALU ; AMMONIA, NITRIT DAN NITRAT

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan komposisi ammonia, nitrit dan nitrat nitrogen dalam air longkang di enam lokasi di sekitar pusat bandaraya Kota Kinabalu. Ini dilaksanakan menggunakan kaedah fenat, hach kit dan fenol disulfonik. pH, oksigen terlarut dan konduktiviti ditentukan secara in-situ. Persampelan dilakukan dua kali bagi setiap lokasi. Kepekatan ammonia, nitrit dan nitrat adalah pada julat 2.25-30.50 mgl⁻¹; 0.006-0.225 mgl⁻¹ dan 7.50-121.46 mgl⁻¹ masing-masing. Daripada pemerhatian, didapati bahawa variasi dan intensiti aktiviti secara relatif di satu-satu tempat menyebabkan kandungan ammonia yang tinggi dalam air longkang di kawasan itu. Ini mungkin juga dipengaruhi oleh kapasiti retensi air yang tinggi. Kandungan nitrat yang didapati amat tinggi di suatu tempat boleh jadi disebabkan oleh akumulasi nitrat oleh proses nitrifikasi. Kesan jarak persampelan, seperti yang dikaji di empat substesen sepanjang longkang besar Api-api mendapati kandungan parameterparameter utama ini berkurangan secara beransur ke hilir. Ini sama ada disebabkan oleh kesan pencairan ke hilir atau mungkin juga tindak balas fotokimia yang menukar nitrogen bukan organik kepada nitrogen organik. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan nitrat dan pH mempunyai hubungan negatif yang signifikan (p = -0.943).



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ABBREVIATIONS LIST

AAS	Atomic Absorption Spectrofotometer
APHA	American Public Health Association
Cd	Cadmium
cm	Centimetre
Cu	Cuprum
Dept	Department
DBKK	Dewan Bandaraya Kota Kinabalu / Kota Kinabalu City Hall
EDTA	Ethylenediamine tetra-acetic acid
GIS	Geographic Information System
HCl	Hydrochloric acid
IC	Ion Chromatography
ISE	Ion Selective Electrode
JPS	Jabatan Pengairan dan Saliran / Department of Irrigation and Drainge
JKR	Jabatan Kerja Raya / Department of Public Works
Kg	Kampung
mg	Milligram
mgl ⁻¹	Milligram per litre
ml	millilitre
nm	Nanometre
N	Nitrogen
NA	Not available
NaOH	Natrium hydroxide / sodium hydroxide
NH ₃ N	Ammonia nitrogen
NH4Cl	Ammonium chloride
NO ₂ ⁻	Nitrite
NO ₃	Nitrate
SB	Sendirian Berhad
WS	Water sample



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

1.1.1 Nitrogen

Ammonia, nitrite and nitrate are nitrogen compounds. Nitrogen is essential to life because it is necessary for the manufacturing of proteins and DNA. Free nitrogen is approximately 80% of the earth's atmosphere. Nitrogen has a gaseous phase and is a major component of earth's atmosphere, however, it is not very reactive and its conversion depends heavily on biological activity (Botkin & Keller, 2003).

Ammonia, nitrite and nitrate nirogen are part of the aquatic nitrogen cycle series. This cycle is dominated by reactions involving biological material (O'Neil, 1993). The reaction, in series can be represented by:

 $N_2 \rightarrow NH_3 \rightarrow NO_2^- \rightarrow NO_3^- \rightarrow amino \; acid \rightarrow proteins$

(1.1)



The process converting nitrate to nitrogen gas is called denitrification, carried out by microorganisms.

Ammonification process can be represented by reaction (1.2) below (O'Neil,1993):

$$(NH_2)_2CO + H_2O \rightarrow 2NH_3 + CO_2 \tag{1.2}$$

The ammonia (NH₃) reacts with water to make ammonium ion (NH₄) which is then normally incorporated into plant tissue. Ammonium may also take part in another bacterially mediated process; nitrification as shown below (Mackenzie, 1995):

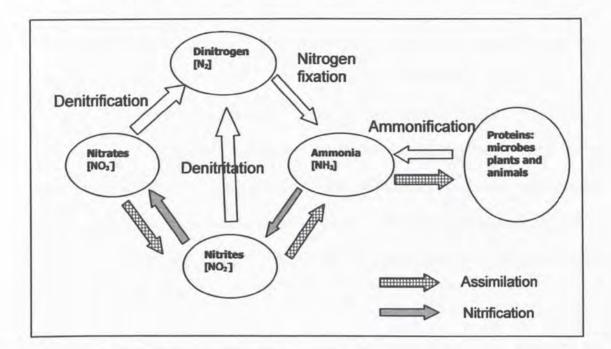
$$4NH_4^+ + 6O_2 \rightarrow 4NO_2^- + 8H^+ + 4H_2O$$
(1.3)
(ammonium) (nitrite)

$$4NO_2^- + 2O_2 \rightarrow 4NO_3^-$$
(1.4)
(nitrite) (nitrate)

Denitrification is carried out by bacteria, such as this one by bacterium Pseudomonas :

$$4NO_3^- + 2H_2O \to 2N_2 + 5O_2 + 4OH^-$$
(1.5)





The nitrogen cycle in aquatic environment could be simplified, as in figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1 Simplified nitrogen cycle in aquatic environment (Source from Horan, 1990 and Jenicek et al., 2004)

The natural biogeochemical cycle of nitrogen is being heavily impacted by anthropogenic activities. Nitrogen is stored in earth in the form of dispersed organic matter, coal, oil and gas. When fossil fuel is burned, nitrogen gases may be released to the environment. Agricultural activities use nitrogen as nutrient, which will not be immediately returned to the soil after decomposition of plants. This gave idea to the use of artificial or animal-originated nitrogen. Excess nitrogen is washed away into streams and river, causing pollution (Mackenzie, 1995).



1.1.2 Drainage

Drainage is a simple, basic infrastructure which serve to remove unwanted water from urban communities; stormwater, external floodwater, marshwater, sullage and toilet wastes. Thus, the need for drainage increase as water supplies improve (Hardoy *et al*, 1995). The local Department of Irrigation and Drainage or Jabatan Pengairan dan Saliran (JPS) stated that the main purpose of urban and rural drainage is to collect excess water, usually stormwater, from land surfaces and convey it to a river, a lake, a swamp, the sea or even a groundwater storage, with minimal nuisance, danger or damage (Jabatan Pengairan Saliran, 2006).

The published information on drain types mentioned only two categories; simply as the open and covered drains (Jabatan Pengairan Saliran, 2006), however, observations and personal inquiries about the drainage system in the study area reveals that there are several types of drains available and in overall could be classified, strictly for the purpose of this study as listed below:

- A. Small perimeter drain which serve as water discharge receiver for every building or blocks of buildings and link to other similar type of drain within its surroundings.
- B. A larger drain into which the contents of drain type (a) will flow. These, similarly, link with each other and where the contents next destination will be.



- C. The largest observed drains, making their way to the sea.
- D. Underground large drains, with concrete-tunnel structures built in series in an inland to shore flow, most probably serving only the city centre.

It is also important to be informed that the existing drainage system in the study area is ever changing with new physical developments, and could be built by several institutions, such as the Kota Kinabalu City Hall or Dewan Bandaraya Kota Kinabalu (DBKK), Department of Public Works or Jabatan Kerja Raya (JKR), the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and the Department of Irrigation and Drainage or Jabatan Pengairan danSaliran (JPS). For the same reason, no complete and updated guide to all the existing drains is available. Each of these institutions built their own drain for use related to their responsibilities; but in practical, all the drains are potential recipients of natural water, wastewater or even litters (personal inquiry, Fraser Duing, 2006).

1.2 Significance of study

It is very useful to conduct a study on this subject, concerning that these studied parameters, uncontrolled and ignored in a long term might pose unpleasant phenomena along the drainage facility and it its final destination; the sea. Excess NO₃⁻ would lead to eutrophication, while NH₃ and NO₂⁻; although always not found to be in high concentration in surface water are poisonous to fish and other animals (Reeve, 1994).



1.3 Objectives of study

- To determine the spatial distribution of ammonia, nitrite and nitrate content of drainage water around Kota Kinabalu city centre area.
- To determine effects of distance of sampling point to drainage exit on the concentration of ammonia, nitrite and nitrate at one pre-determined site with four chosen serial points along one major drain.
- To determine, if any, an overall relationships between ammonia, nitrite and nitrate, and in addition, to see how the results change with associated common parameters; pH, conductivity, and dissolved oxygen.



1.4 Study scope

1.4.1 Area of Study

Area studied is limited to several blocks around Kota Kinabalu city centre, as shown in the map below.

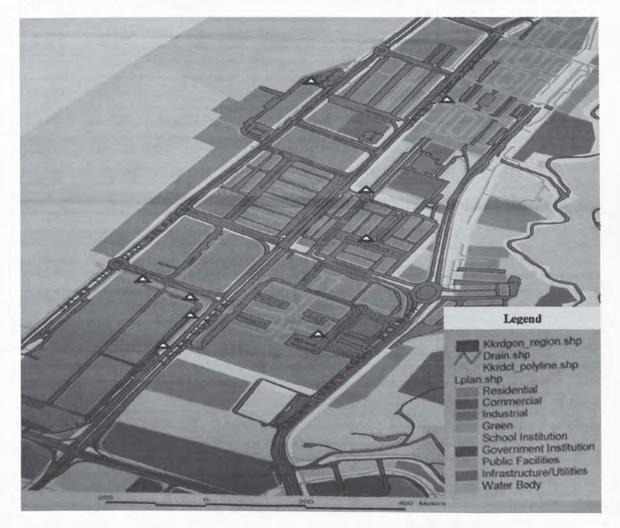


Figure 1.2 The area of study, Kota Kinabalu city centre. The triangles represent the sampling sites.(Source from Dewan Bandaraya Kota Kinabalu, 2006)



1.4.2 Sampling

Sampling is limited to accessible drains, which were of the open-drain category. Specifically, the perimeter drains (type A) close to the larger drains (type B) are chosen as sampling sites as it is the primary recipients of the surrounding water discharge with sufficient volume of water for sampling.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Nitrogen Content

2.1.1 Nitrogen content in several types of water

Nitrogen content varies in different types of surface water. The concentration in natural water for nitrate is in the range of 0 to 25 mgl⁻¹, 0.0 to 1.0 mgl⁻¹ for nitrite and 0 to 2.0 mgl⁻¹ for ammonia (Reeve, 1994). Nitrate generally occurs in trace quantities in surface water but may attain high levels in some groundwater.

A common feature of drainage water is high nitrogen content in the form of ammonium or nitrate (Hao & Martinez, 1998). In the effluent of nitrifying biological treatment plants, nitrate may be found in concentration of up to 30 mg as nitrogen per litre. Ammonia is present naturally in surface and wastewater. Its concentration is generally low in groundwater due to soil particle and clay adsorption. Ammonia concentrations in water vary from less than 10 μ gl⁻¹ in natural and groundwater to more than 30 mgl⁻¹ in some wastewater (APHA, 1998).



In domestic sewage in Malaysia, the total nitrogen (as N) was reported generally to be at the concentration of 40 mgl⁻¹, organic nitrogen; 15 mgl⁻¹, and free ammonia; 25 mgl⁻¹, however, amount of nitrite and nitrate were both undetectable (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 1999).

In a study on urban stormwater which include samples taken from the urban drainage in Arizona, the maximum total N concentration is found out to be 31.6 mgl⁻¹ and a minimum of less than 1.5 mgl⁻¹. As for organic N, the same study revealed a minimum of 5 mgl⁻¹ and maximum of 18.8 mgl⁻¹ (Fossum, *et al.*,2001). A literature study on the sources and pathways of water, nitrogen and phosphorus claimed that 60% of nitrogen are concentrated in 1% of the surface water in the urban. It concluded that drainage system is a diluting system, thus, water separation is crucial to improve the surface water quality (Hermann & Klaus, 1997). Another study agreed on the need to efficiently separate sewage and stormwater flow in the urban area (Asaf *et al.*, 2004). They also found that stormwater concentration were higher at stations draining a larger area. This study, (Asaf, *et al.*, 2004) which was performed in a semiarid zone, suggests that concentrations of the urban storm water's chemical and isotopic composition link to the length of the stormwater flow path.

2.1.2 Nitrogen content around and similar to the local environment

Studies around the study area were mostly carried out for Environmental Impact Assessment purposes, and thus were carried out by commercial consultants and groups.



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