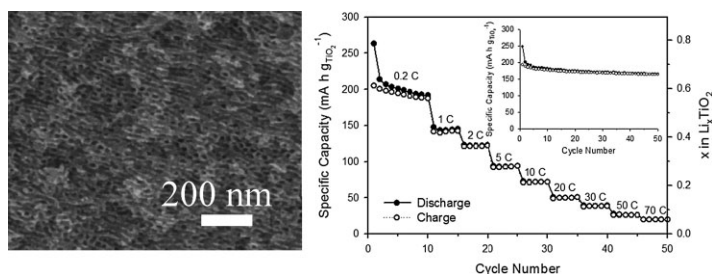


Direct Access to Mesoporous Crystalline TiO₂/Carbon Composites with Large and Uniform Pores for Use as Anode Materials in Lithium Ion Batteries^a

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Mesoporous and highly crystalline TiO₂ (anatase)/carbon composites with large (>5 nm) and uniform pores were synthesized using PI-*b*-PEO block copolymers as structure directing agents. Pore sizes could be tuned by utilizing block copolymers with different molecular weights. The resulting mesoporous TiO₂/carbon was successfully used as an anode material for Li ion batteries. Without addition of conducting aid (Super P), the electrode showed high capacity during the first insertion/desertion cycle due to carbon wiring inside the walls of mesoporous TiO₂/carbon. The electrode further showed stable cycle performance up to 50 cycles and the specific charge capacity at 30 C was 38 mA h (g of TiO₂)⁻¹, which indicates CCM-TiO₂/carbon can be used as a material for high rate use.



Introduction

Transition metal oxides are expected to enhance performance levels of various energy storage devices, such as lithium ion batteries and fuel cells.^[1] For example, to improve the catalytic performance in fuel cells, the electrodes were recently modified with transition metal oxides, such as TiO₂, CeO₂, and WO₃.^[2] Several transition metal oxides, including TiO₂, SnO₂, and V₂O₅ have been considered as promising electrode materials for lithium secondary batteries.^[3] For example, nanostructured TiO₂ materials have been employed as anode materials for lithium ion insertion.^[4] The high reaction potential (ca. 1.6–2.1 V vs. Li/Li⁺) of TiO₂ over the already-commercialized graphite provides two important advantages:^[5] (i) Li plating on the surface of anode materials can be avoided, constituting an important safety consideration. (ii) Because of negligible side reactions above 1.0 V (vs. Li/Li⁺), high surface area TiO₂ can be employed as the anode for high rate applications.

Conceptually, mesoporous transition metal oxide/carbon composites are expected to be very useful as electrode

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materials, due to the electrical conductivity of carbon and electrochemical functionality of transition metal oxides. Recently, silicon-based anode materials have been described, but these approaches require cumbersome cost-ineffective deposition techniques and are usually plagued with low cycling capacity.^[6] In order to improve relevance for applications, the synthesis approach should be simple and cost-effective. Usually, transition metal oxide/carbon composites have been fabricated by post-deposition of transition metal oxide nanoparticles on already synthesized nanostructured carbon materials.^[7] However, this requires very tedious multi-steps in order to make the nanostructured composite and to incorporate the transition metal oxides. Specifically, the process to make metal oxide nanoparticles dispersed on ordered mesoporous carbons^[7b-d] is composed of more than nine steps over 10 d to get the final composite materials.

Several research groups have synthesized pure mesoporous titanium dioxide using commercially available P123 ((EO)₂₀(PO)₇₀(EO)₂₀).^[8] Very recently, Zhao and co-workers reported on the synthesis of mesoporous TiO₂/carbon composites using commercially available Pluronic P123 block copolymers without further electrochemical characterization. While suggesting an interesting approach, the pore size of the resulting materials was smaller than 3.5 nm.^[9] In order to provide easy access of electrolyte molecules to such a functional composite in diverse applications, it is desirable, however, to generate mesoporous transition metal oxides/carbon composite with large (>5 nm) and uniform pores.^[10]

Herein, we report on the direct synthesis of mesoporous and highly crystalline TiO₂ (anatase)/carbon composites with large (>5 nm), tunable and uniform pores and their performances as anodes in Li ion batteries. Well-defined conducting carbon/transition metal oxide composites were synthesized through a simple synthetic route for use as electrode materials. Synthesis was achieved by the assembly of poly(isoprene-*block*-ethylene oxide) (PI-*b*-PEO) block copolymers with varying molecular weights with titanium dioxide sols and carbon precursors, furfuryl alcohol (FA) or resol nanoparticles,^[11] which selectively swell the hydrophilic PEO block of the block copolymers. A non-hydrolytic sol-gel route to metal oxides was employed to make TiO₂ sols.^[12] PI-*b*-PEO block copolymers were synthesized in our laboratory with controllable molecular weights. PI-*b*-PEO was used since it is well established as a model system for the study of mesoporous materials synthesis.^[13]

Experimental Part

Synthesis of Cornell Composition of Matters (CCM)-TiO₂/Carbon-1

PI-*b*-PEO-1 was used with $\bar{M}_n = 27\,220\text{ g}\cdot\text{mol}^{-1}$ and 16.7 wt.-% PEO. After 0.2 g of PI-*b*-PEO was dissolved in 2 mL tetrahydrofuran (THF), 0.53 mL of titanium tetraisopropoxide (TTIP), and 0.21 mL titanium

chloride (IV) were added into the solution. After stirring for 1 h at room temperature, 0.5 g of FA was added and stirred for more than 12 h at room temperature. Films were cast by evaporation of the solvent and byproducts in air on a hot plate at 50 °C and then at 130 °C in a vacuum oven for one hour. During heat-treatment at 50 °C under air and subsequently at 130 °C under vacuum, the FA is polymerized in hydrophilic block copolymer domain. The as-synthesized amorphous material was heat treated to 700 °C using 1 °C · min⁻¹ ramp under argon and held for 2 h or more resulting in crystallization of the amorphous metal oxide walls and conversion of the carbon source to conducting carbon.

While we did not perform the entire method in a single pot (the precursors were mixed in a vial, films were cast on an aluminum dish by evaporation, and finally the films were heat-treated at 700 °C to get final mesoporous TiO₂/carbon material), one can in theory use a single alumina dish (one pot) for each of the processing steps, i.e., mix the precursors, evaporate off the solvents to obtain a thin film, and still use the same dish for the subsequent heat treatments.

Synthesis of CCM-TiO₂/Carbon-2

PI-*b*-PEO was used with $\bar{M}_n = 15\,640\text{ g}\cdot\text{mol}^{-1}$ and 13.9 wt.-% PEO. After 0.2 g of PI-*b*-PEO was dissolved in 2 mL THF, 0.53 mL of TTIP, and 0.21 mL titanium chloride (IV) were added into the solution. After stirring for more than 1 h at room temperature, 0.24 g of resol^[11] was added and stirred for more than 12 h at room temperature. The \bar{M}_n of resol was $\approx 300\text{ g}\cdot\text{mol}^{-1}$. The remaining process step was the same as described before.

Synthesis of Pure Mesoporous TiO₂, CCM-TiO₂

PI-*b*-PEO-1 was used with $\bar{M}_n = 27\,220\text{ g}\cdot\text{mol}^{-1}$ and 16.7 wt.-% PEO. After 0.2 g of PI-*b*-PEO was dissolved in 2 mL THF, 0.71 mL of TTIP, and 0.27 mL titanium chloride (IV) were added into the solution. The remaining process step was the same as described before, except heat treatment was at 450 °C for 2 h under air.

Electrochemical Characterization

A 2032-type coin cell was employed to assess the electrochemical performance of anatase TiO₂ electrodes. The composite electrodes were prepared by spreading a slurry mixture of active material, Super P (MMM Co., as a carbon additive for conductivity enhancement) and polyvinylidene fluoride (PVdF, as a binder) on a piece of copper foil (as a current collector, apparent area = 1 cm²). The electrodes were then dried at 120 °C under vacuum for 12 h, and subsequently pressed in order to enhance the inter-particle contact and to ensure a better adhesion to the current collector. Lithium foils (Cyprus Co.) were used as the counter and reference electrode, and 1.0 M LiPF₆ dissolved in a mixture of ethylene carbonate (EC) and diethyl carbonate (DMC) (1:2 v/v) was used as the electrolyte. The galvanostatic discharge-charge cycling was made at a current density of 0.2 C in the voltage range of 1.0–3.0 V (vs. Li/Li⁺) [1 C = 335.5 mA (g of TiO₂)⁻¹]. In this paper, the specific current and capacity were expressed on the basis of only the TiO₂ component, and the lithiation was expressed as discharging, whereas the delithiation was expressed as charging.

Small angle X-ray scattering (SAXS) experiments were performed on Rigaku RU-H3R copper rotating anode ($\lambda = 1.54 \text{ \AA}$). XRD data was obtained from powdered samples using a Scintag Inc. q - q diffractometer ($\text{CuK}\alpha$, 1.54 \AA). TEM images were recorded on a JEOL 1200 EX at 120 kV. HRTEM images were recorded on an FEI Tecnai G20 TEM at 200 kV. Raman data was collected on a Renishaw InVia microRaman system. TGA was performed on a TG/DTA 320 (heating rate: $5 \text{ }^\circ\text{C} \cdot \text{min}^{-1}$). Nitrogen adsorption/desorption isotherms were measured at $-196 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ by using a Micromeritics ASAP 2020 system. The samples were degassed at $150 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ overnight on a vacuum line.

Result and Discussions

As we show below, by changing the molecular weight of the block copolymer, we can control the pore sizes of the resulting crystalline TiO₂/carbon composites, denoted as CCM-TiO₂/carbon. Two different PI-*b*-PEO block copolymers were synthesized with standard anionic procedure. PI-*b*-PEO-1 with $\bar{M}_n = 27\,220 \text{ g} \cdot \text{mol}^{-1}$, 16.7 wt.-% PEO, and polydispersity index 1.02 and PI-*b*-PEO-2 with $\bar{M}_n = 15\,640 \text{ g} \cdot \text{mol}^{-1}$, 13.9 wt.-% PEO, and polydispersity index 1.03. PI-*b*-PEO-1 and PI-*b*-PEO-2 were subsequently used for the synthesis of composites CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 and CCM-TiO₂/carbon-2, respectively, in a “one-pot” procedure as described in the Experimental Part.

During heat-treatment of as-made materials at $700 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ under nitrogen or argon atmosphere, most of the di-block copolymer is burned off, and amorphous TiO₂ and carbon precursors are converted to crystalline TiO₂ and conducting carbon, respectively, see Figure 1. Some of the polyisoprene of the di-block copolymer is also converted to conductive carbon.^[14] SEM images of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 (Figure 2a) shows uniformly sized $\approx 20 \text{ nm}$ sized open and accessible pores and the structure is short-range ordered reminiscent of wormhole-like structured mesoporous silica HMS.^[15] TEM images of as-made material of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 corroborate the SEM results and already show the wormhole-like microphase separated structure which is preserved upon heating (see Figure 1S in Supporting

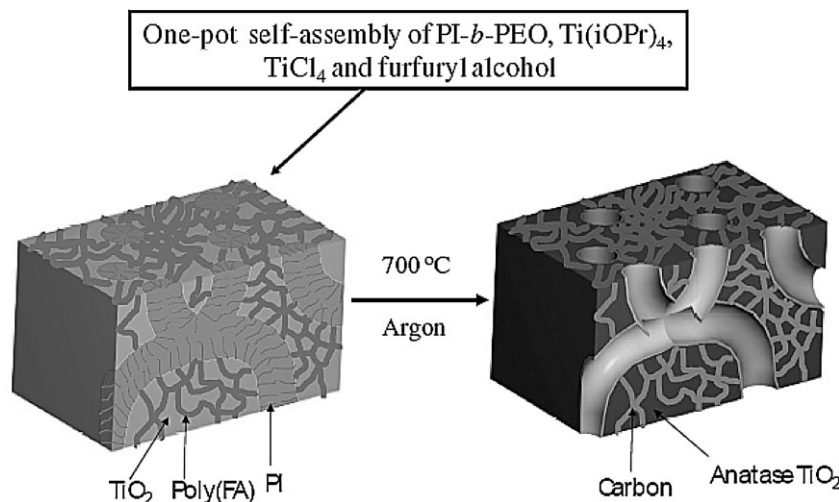


Figure 1. Schematic representation of “one-pot” synthesis of mesoporous crystalline TiO₂/carbon composites with large and uniform pores via carbonization of mesostructured PI-*b*-PEO/amorphous TiO₂/poly(furfuryl alcohol). The hexagonal arrangement of domains only serves for illustration purposes, see text.

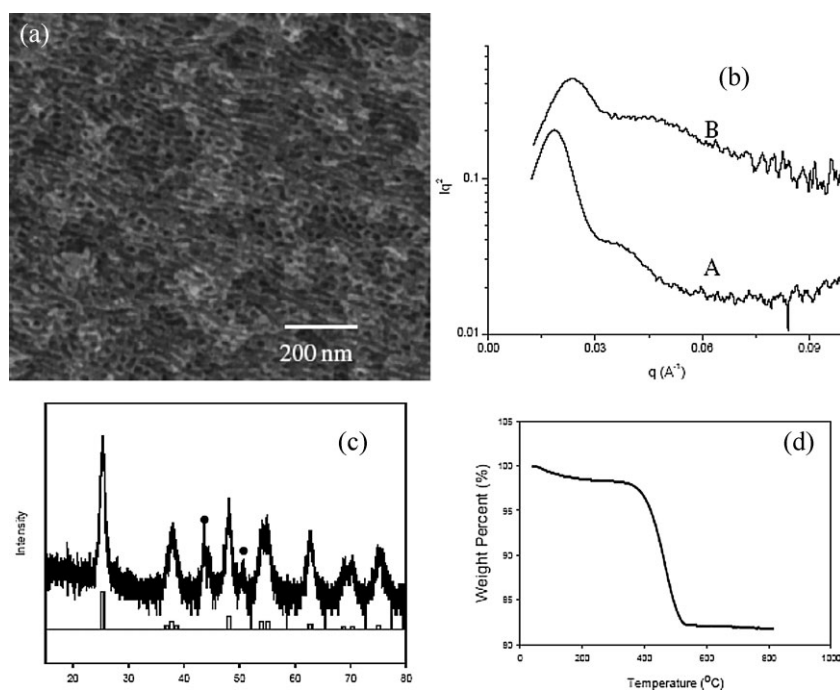


Figure 2. (a) SEM image of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1; (b) SAXS traces of as-made composite (A) and CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 (B); (c) powder XRD pattern of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1. Bar markers signify the expected peaks for anatase TiO₂ structure (PDF 21-1276). Solid spheres indicate the peaks for aluminum substrate; (d) TGA data of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1.

Information). Result of the SAXS characterization of the as-made and heat-treated materials is depicted in Figure 2b. For the as-made material, a first order peak is observed centered around values for the scattering wave vector, q , corresponding to a d_{spacing} of 33.8 nm. The corresponding higher order peak is broad and unstructured which is typical for wormhole-like or short-range ordered hexagonal structures.^[15] The wormhole-like structure is considered to be three-dimensionally interconnected, which is favorable for the diffusion of molecules inside the pores. After heat-treatment at 700 °C (see trace B in Figure 2b), the d_{spacing} derived from the first order peak shifted to 26.6 nm, and the second order peak is preserved. The peak shift is the result of shrinkage of the structure during conversion of the carbon precursors to carbon and amorphous TiO₂ to crystalline anatase TiO₂. The formation of a crystalline oxide is evident from XRD analysis of the resulting materials (Figure 2c). Comparing peak positions with crystallographic databases identifies the material as the anatase phase of TiO₂ (PDF 21-1276). The average crystallite size as calculated from the Debye–Scherrer equation is 7.8 nm.^[16] Thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) of the heat-treated material run in air shows a 16% weight loss that occurs around 500 °C which is assigned to the oxidation of carbon in the pore walls, see Figure 2d. Raman spectra of the same material reveal the carbonaceous nature of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 with characteristic D-band ($\approx 1350\text{ cm}^{-1}$) and G-band ($\approx 1600\text{ cm}^{-1}$) (Figure 3). The intensity of D-band and G-band was much increased by increasing

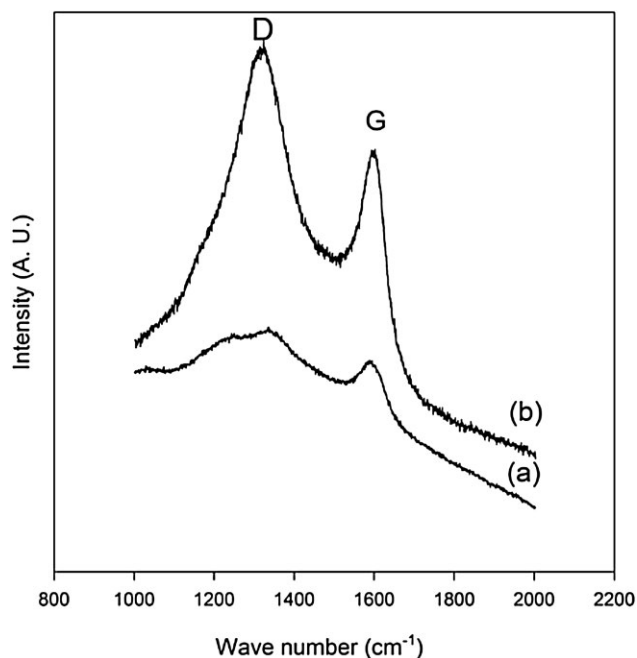


Figure 3. (a) Raman spectra of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 material heat-treated at 450 °C under N₂ (b) and CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 heat-treated at 700 °C under air.

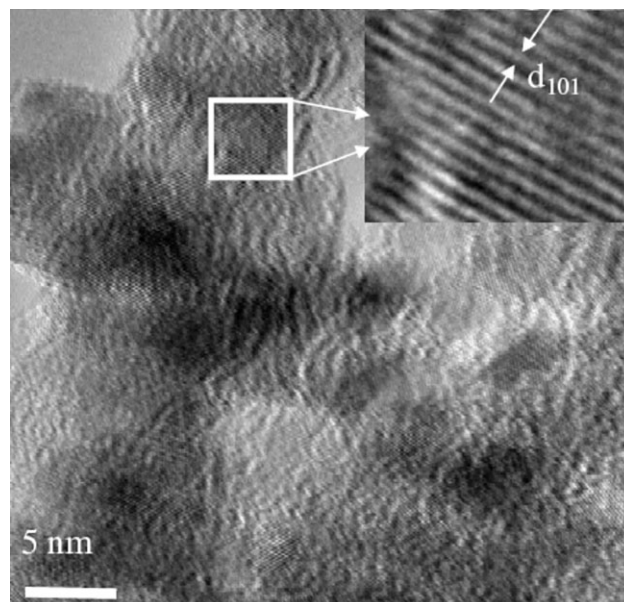


Figure 4. High-resolution TEM (HRTEM) image of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1; inset: image showing d_{101} spacing of the anatase structure.

heat-treatment temperature from 450 to 700 °C, meaning that degree of graphitization was improved by heat-treatment at high temperature.

High-resolution TEM (HRTEM) of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 reveals that the walls are composed of small TiO₂ nanocrystals (Figure 4). The carbon might be present between TiO₂ crystals. For individual nanocrystals, a d_{101} spacing characteristic for the anatase phase structure was clearly observed (Figure 4, inset).

To check whether the pores are open and accessible, nitrogen adsorption–desorption isotherms were measured on a Micromeritics ASAP 2020 at 77 K. In Figure 5,

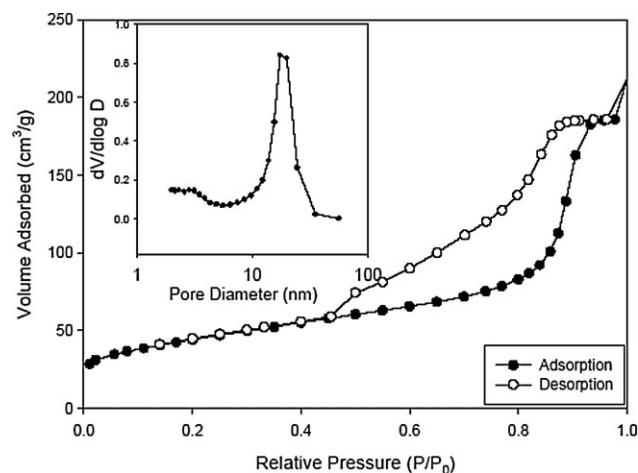


Figure 5. Nitrogen adsorption–desorption isotherms of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 with inset showing corresponding pore size distributions of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1.

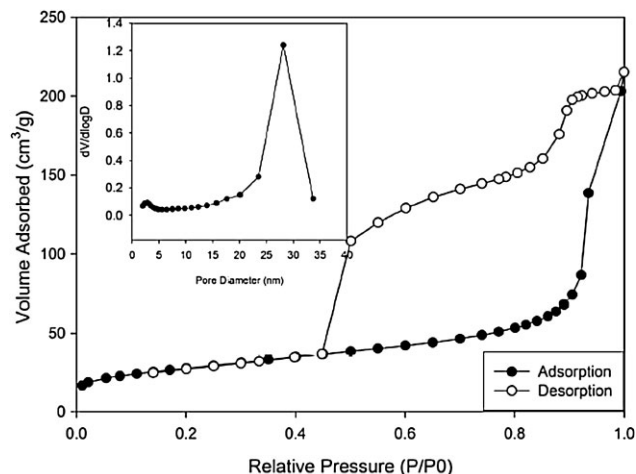


Figure 6. Nitrogen adsorption-desorption isotherms of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 material heat-treated at 450 °C under N₂, with inset showing corresponding pore size distributions. BET surface area and BJH pore size are 99 m² · g⁻¹ and 28.1 nm, respectively.

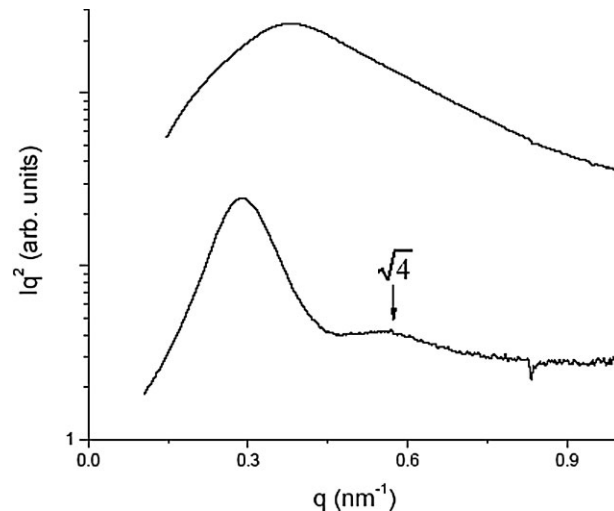


Figure 7. SAXS traces of as-made composite (a) and CCM-TiO₂/carbon-2 (b).

CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 shows a nitrogen sorption isotherm of type IV according to the BDDT classification, with a specific surface area 154 m² · g⁻¹ and a pore volume 0.3 cm³ · g⁻¹. Pore size calculations based on the BJH method reveal a pore diameter of 17.4 nm.^[17] Such large pores are extremely important to provide access for large molecules during electrochemical processes. Using the four-point probe method, electrical conductivity of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 was measured under a pressure of 6.9 MPa (1 000 psi). As-made CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 heat-treated at 450 °C under N₂ (Figure 6) lead to a conductivity value of 8.7 × 10⁻⁷ S · cm⁻¹. This low conductivity is consistent with very weak carbon peaks in Raman scattering of this sample (Figure 3). In contrast, CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 heat-treated at 700 °C under N₂ showed a conductivity of 9.4 × 10⁻³ S · cm⁻¹. This considerably higher value is consistent with relatively well-developed G and D bands in Raman scattering spectra compared to those of the sample heat-treated at 450 °C. The conductivity value of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 is comparable to that of ordered mesoporous carbon materials derived from ordered mesoporous silica templates.^[18] Furthermore, such high conductivities exclude the possibility that the carbon material is macro-phase separated and suggest that the conducting carbon is homogeneously mixed with TiO₂ nanocrystals in the mesostructured walls. Considering the density of anatase TiO₂ and carbon (density of anatase = 3.88 cm³ · g⁻¹, density of graphite = 2.27 cm³ · g⁻¹) and weight percentage of each material, the volume percentage of carbon should be at least 27%.^[19]

By using block copolymer PI-*b*-PEO-2 with smaller molecular weight, a mesoporous TiO₂/carbon material with smaller pore size (denoted as CCM-TiO₂/carbon-2) was synthesized, demonstrating tunability of the pore size of

the present mesoporous crystalline TiO₂/carbon composites. The SAXS results of the as-made and heat-treated materials (Figure 7) is again suggestive of a wormhole-like structure. For the as-made composite, a first order peak is observed centered around values for the scattering wave vector, q , corresponding a d_{spacing} of 21.8 nm. The higher order peak is broad and unstructured which is typical for wormhole-like or short-range ordered hexagonal structures. After heat-treatment at 700 °C, a d_{spacing} of the first peak was shifted to 17 nm, which is derived from shrinkage of structure during conversion of carbon precursor to carbon and amorphous TiO₂ to crystalline TiO₂.

From nitrogen adsorption-desorption isotherms (Figure 8a), the pore size and surface area are 8.2 nm and 144 m² · g⁻¹, respectively. From powder XRD pattern (Figure 8b), the walls are also composed of crystalline anatase structure. Carbon content of this composite was 16 wt.-% as estimated from TGA under air.

Figure 9a shows the anodic performance of a composite electrode made from CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1. In order to examine the effect of carbon wiring, electrode from a pure mesoporous TiO₂ sample, referred to as CCM-TiO₂ (for detailed synthetic procedure and characterization, see the Experimental Part and Supporting Information)^[14] was compared to CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 composite electrode made without the carbon additive. In a typical electrode, carbon additive is included to enhance electrode conductivity. However, it is known that mixing large-sized conducting agents with porous materials is difficult due to a possible collapse of porous structure by conventional mixing techniques as well as inhomogeneous mixing, especially for large-scale production.^[20] Note that both of the above electrodes were made without the carbon additive (Super P).

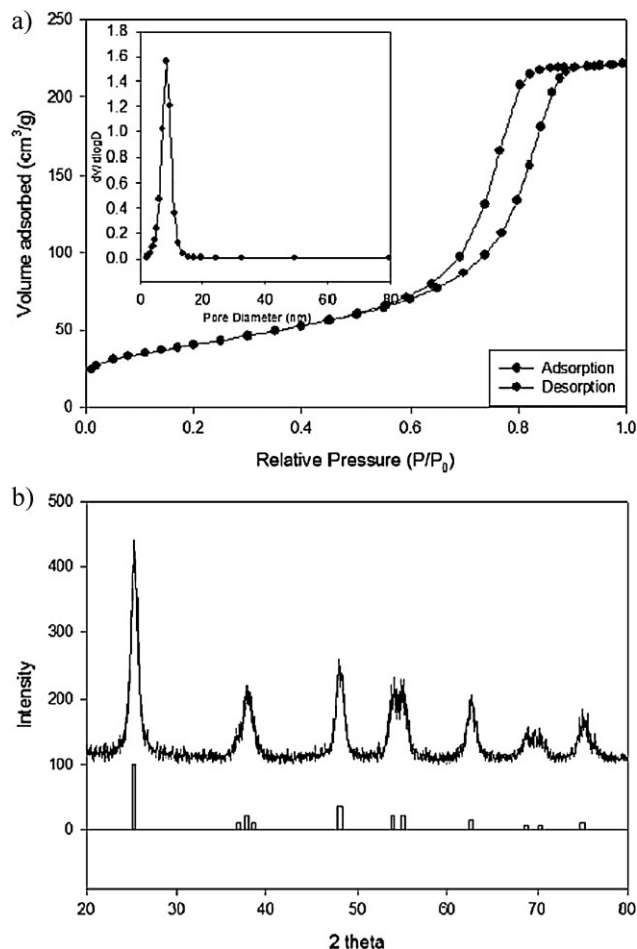


Figure 8. (a) Nitrogen adsorption–desorption isotherms of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-2, with inset showing corresponding pore size distributions. (b) Powder XRD pattern of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-2. Bar markers signify the peaks for anatase TiO₂ structure (PDF 21-1276).

Electrodes were cycled with a specific current of 0.2 C in the range of 1.0–3.0 V (vs. Li/Li⁺).

While the insertion capacity shows a similar value for the two samples (0.65 Li/Ti for CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 and 0.60 Li/Ti for CCM-TiO₂), the desorption capacity of CCM-TiO₂ amounts to only 55% of that for CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 (0.55 Li/Ti for CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 and 0.30 Li/Ti for CCM-TiO₂). Anatase TiO₂ is known to react with Li transforming into lithium titanate, Li_{0.5}TiO₂, by a two-phase reaction [tetragonal (space group *I4₁/amd*) to orthorhombic (space group *Imma*) transition], wherein a decrease of the unit cell along the *c* axis and an increase of the *b* axis occurs with an overall 4% volume expansion.^[21] The poorer desorption capacity of CCM-TiO₂ electrode, wherein there is no carbon component to fill the void spaces between TiO₂ particles, may be ascribed to a loss of electronic contact between TiO₂ particles, which is induced by such a volume change. The higher desorption capacity of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 electrode is then attributed to the presence of carbon component that

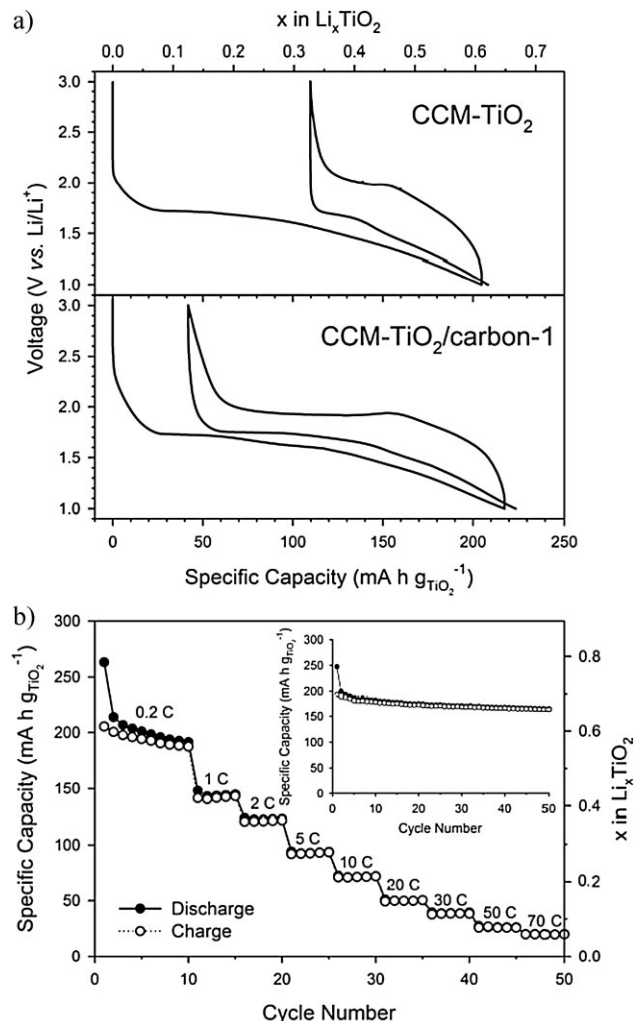


Figure 9. (a) Galvanostatic discharge–charge curves of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 and pure mesoporous TiO₂ electrodes cycled at a specific current of 0.2 C in the range of 1.0–3.0 V (vs. Li/Li⁺); (b) Rate performance for CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 electrode cycled at different rates. Cycle performance of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 electrode at 0.2 C is provided in the inset.

plays as a conductive wire in TiO₂ frameworks. An evidencing feature for this assumption is the superior electronic conductivity of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 ($9.4 \times 10^{-3} \text{ S} \cdot \text{cm}^{-1}$) to that of CCM-TiO₂ ($8.7 \times 10^{-7} \text{ S} \cdot \text{cm}^{-1}$).

Figure 9b presents the cycle and rate performance of CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 electrode. For providing sufficient conductive networks between particles and thereby achieving the best performance, the conducting aid (Super P, 12 wt.-%) was loaded in the composite electrodes. As shown in the inset, CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 electrode exhibits a stable cycle performance. This could be due to the nano-size effect of grains, which allows a better accommodation of volume change upon insertion–desorption processes^[21e] as well as stable electronic conduction paths through carbon wiring of the TiO₂ framework. It is also noticeable that TiO₂

in this electrode exhibits a high capacity (0.75 Li/Ti for insertion and 0.60 Li/Ti for desertion). Wagemaker et al. reported that the particle size of anatase TiO₂ has a striking impact on the Li insertion behavior.^[22] Many studies on nano-sized or mesoporous TiO₂ show larger capacity than 0.5 Li/Ti, which has been accepted as the maximum insertion value at room temperature.^[20,23–26] The higher capacity observed in the present work would thus be explained by this nano-size effect. For a test of the rate performance, the electrode was first cycled at 0.2 C for 10 cycles, and the rate was increased in stages to 70 C. The specific charge capacity at 30 C is 38 mA · h (g of TiO₂)⁻¹, which amounts to 18% of the first charge capacity. This value is much higher than that of the pure mesoporous TiO₂ electrode reported in ref. [26]. There is no doubt that a short diffusion length in a mesoporous structure is necessary for achieving a high rate capability because of the low diffusion coefficient ($2 \times 10^{-15} \text{ cm}^2 \cdot \text{s}^{-1}$) in the solid phase.^[21c] A better rate capability that is achieved by shortening the diffusion length in mesoporous structure can be confirmed from the data obtained even at low current (0.2 C). The non-porous TiO₂ (BET surface area $\approx 0.2 \text{ m}^2 \cdot \text{g}^{-1}$), wherein the mesopores are collapsed due to high heat-treatment temperature (700 °C), is lithiated only up to 0.15 Li/Ti, which is far smaller than that for the CCM-TiO₂/carbon-1 electrode (Figure S3 of the Supporting Information). The electronic conduction is also a crucial factor on rate capability because of the insulating character of TiO₂.^[20] Along this line, the conductive wiring of carbon on TiO₂ framework is believed to play a favorable role to give an excellent rate capability in this material, which is in accordance with other reports on the high rate capability of mesoporous TiO₂ composites with carbon nano-tubes (CNT)^[20] or RuO₂.^[26] However, to make such composite materials,^[20,26] expensive CNTs or toxic cadmium ions should be added during synthesis. Furthermore, the resulting pore sizes are not well-defined but rather broad, making it impossible to study pore-size-dependent electrochemical properties.

Conclusion

In conclusion, mesoporous and highly crystalline TiO₂ (anatase)/carbon composites with large (>5 nm) and uniform pores were synthesized using PI-*b*-PEO block copolymers as structure directing agents. Pore sizes could be tuned by utilizing block copolymers with different molecular weights. The resulting mesoporous TiO₂/carbon was successfully used as an anode material for Li ion batteries. Without addition of conducting aid (Super P), the electrode showed high capacity during the first insertion/desertion cycle due to carbon wiring inside the walls of mesoporous TiO₂/carbon. The electrode further showed stable cycle

performance up to 50 cycles and the specific charge capacity at 30 C was 38 mA · h (g of TiO₂)⁻¹, which indicates CCM-TiO₂/carbon can be used as a material for high rate use. We expect the CCM-TiO₂/carbon could also be used as a support for fuel cell electrode to reduce the amount of the expensive platinum metals.^[27] The advantage of the present “one-pot”-type synthesis approach over previous work lies in its simplicity in terms of the necessary steps as well as the tunability of the resulting compositional as well as structural parameters. The latter provides an advanced materials platform toward energy generation and storage application.

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