

Smoke rings in atmospheric science

Riccardo Fantoni*

Università di Trieste, Dipartimento di Fisica, strada Costiera 11, 34151 Grignano (Trieste), Italy

(Dated: November 14, 2025)

Course 302 “Atmospherical Science” by Walter Robinson held at Urbana/Champaign during Fall 1992.

Keywords: Atmospheric science, smoke ring

I. INTRODUCTION

In *dynamic meteorology* one applies the fundamental principles of physics to understand and predict the *motion* of the atmosphere. Focusing on the motions of the atmosphere, this subject does *not* address the interactions of electromagnetic radiation or the chemistry with the atmosphere or the microscopic processes involved in the formation of precipitation [1].

Consider a velocity profile \mathbf{u} of the atmosphere. Its *circulation* is defined as

$$C = \oint \mathbf{u} \cdot d\boldsymbol{\ell}, \quad (1.1)$$

and the *vorticity* is the circulation for unit area.

The time derivative of the circulation

$$\frac{dC}{dt} = \frac{d}{dt} \oint \mathbf{u} \cdot d\boldsymbol{\ell} = \oint \left[\frac{d\mathbf{u}}{dt} \cdot d\boldsymbol{\ell} + \mathbf{u} \cdot d\boldsymbol{\ell} \right] = \oint \frac{d\mathbf{u}}{dt} \cdot d\boldsymbol{\ell}. \quad (1.2)$$

To study the dynamics of smoke rings we may use the momentum equation in an inertial frame and neglect friction (assuming a negligible viscosity)

$$\frac{d\mathbf{u}}{dt} = -g\hat{\mathbf{z}} - \frac{\nabla P}{\rho}, \quad (1.3)$$

where g is the gravity constant, ρ is the density of the air, and P is the atmospheric pressure. We then find

$$\frac{dC}{dt} = - \oint \frac{\nabla P}{\rho} \cdot d\boldsymbol{\ell} = - \oint \frac{dP}{\rho}. \quad (1.4)$$

In an incompressible fluid ρ is constant and we find that $dC/dt = 0$, i.e. C is a constant. This is also known as Kelvin circulation theorem.

In Fig. 1 we show a vertical section cutting a smoke ring along its diameter and the velocity profile of the air. From the close up of Fig. 2 we can say that $C = 2\pi r \bar{u}$ with r the internal radius of the smoke torus and \bar{u} the air velocity at the torus surface. Since C is constant as the smoke ring evolves in time its final fate is to disappear with $R \rightarrow \infty$, the ring radius, and $r \rightarrow 0$, the torus internal radius. So that we conclude that the speed of the air at the torus surface must

$$\bar{u} \longrightarrow \infty. \quad (1.5)$$

AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

Conflicts of interest

None declared.

* riccardo.fantoni@scuola.istruzione.it

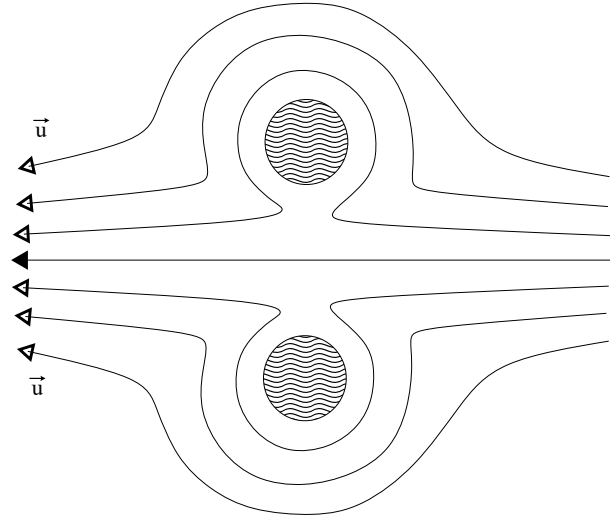


FIG. 1. Vertical section cutting a smoke ring along its diameter and the velocity profile of the air.

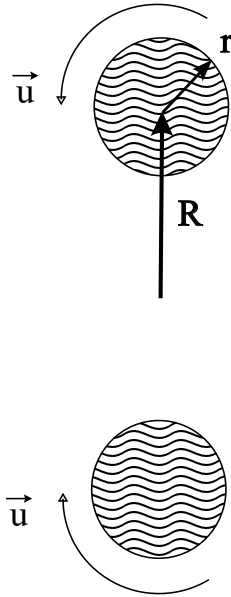


FIG. 2. Close up of the vertical section cutting a smoke ring along its diameter. R is the outer radius of the torus and r its inner radius. The velocity \mathbf{u} at the torus surface has magnitude \bar{u} .

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Funding

None declared.

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- [1] R. Fantoni, Two-phase coexistence for hydrogen-helium mixtures, Phys. Rev. E **92**, 012133 (2015).