

Ozonolysis and photolysis of alkene-terminated self-assembled monolayers on quartz nanoparticles: implications for photochemical aging of organic aerosol particles

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Photolysis of alkene-terminated self assembled monolayers (SAM) deposited on Degussa SiO₂ nanoparticles is studied following oxidation of SAM with a gaseous ozone/oxygen mixture. Infrared cavity ring-down spectroscopy is used to observe gas-phase products generated during ozonolysis and subsequent photolysis of SAM in real time. Reactions taking place during ozonolysis transform alkene-terminated SAM into a photochemically active state capable of photolysis in the tropospheric actinic window ($\lambda > 295$ nm). Formaldehyde and formic acid are the observed photolysis products. Photodissociation action spectra of oxidized SAM and the observed pattern of gas-phase products are consistent with the well-established Criegee mechanism of ozonolysis of terminal alkenes. There is strong evidence for the presence of secondary ozonides (1,3,4-trioxalones) and other peroxides on the oxidized SAM surface. The data imply that photolysis plays a role in atmospheric aging of primary and secondary organic aerosol particles.

Introduction

Atmospheric aerosol particles play an important role in controlling global climate and air quality.^{1,2} Although there have been numerous studies of the impact of aerosol particles on climate, unresolved issues and discrepancies persist.³ Chemical aging of aerosol particles has recently attracted strong interest from atmospheric chemists⁴ because chemical properties of the air–particle interface may affect the ability of aerosol particles to act as cloud condensation nuclei (CCN).⁵ Field observations of aerosol composition show that a substantial fraction of tropospheric aerosol particles can be classified as organic.⁶ Surface organics are continuously oxidized by reactions with atmospheric oxidizers including ozone and hydroxyl radicals.⁷ Such heterogeneous oxidation reactions may lead to the modification of surface chemical composition and morphology of particles, resulting in a change in their CCN activities.

Ozone is the second most important oxidizer of biogenic atmospheric organics after the hydroxyl radical. It is especially effective in oxidation of molecules containing unsaturated carbon–carbon bonds.⁸ The generally accepted mechanism of ozonolysis of olefins^{9,10} includes a rate-limiting formation of a primary ozonide (POZ), followed by a rapid unimolecular decomposition of the POZ into a stable carbonyl and an unstable carbonyl oxide, followed by secondary reactions of the carbonyl oxide. The secondary reactions result in products with a variety of chemical properties, depending on the reac-

tion pathways. In an inert liquid environment, the carbonyl oxide normally reacts with the geminate carbonyl to form a secondary ozonide (SOZ). In the presence of water or other participating solvents, carbonyl oxides form organic peroxides. In the gas phase, the fates of energy-rich carbonyl oxides are usually dominated by various decomposition and isomerization processes.¹¹

In addition to altering the chemical composition, oxidation of organic aerosol particles is likely to affect their photochemical properties. The absorption spectrum of alkenes that were partly oxidized by ozone is expected to undergo a considerable shift to the red compared to that of parent alkene molecules. The increase in the absorption cross section is primarily due to aldehydes and peroxides formed during oxidation. Indeed, the maxima of gas phase absorption cross sections of aldehydes (~ 300 nm) and peroxides (< 280 nm) appear at longer wavelengths compared to those of alkenes (< 220 nm). If the absorption cross sections are significantly shifted into the tropospheric relevant window ($\lambda > 295$ nm) direct photolysis processes can become a factor in aging of organic aerosol particles. Such “photoaging” can act as an additional source of small organic molecules and free radicals in the atmosphere, and uniquely modify the surface properties of organic aerosol particles.

In the present work, alkene-terminated molecules adsorbed on the surface of silicon oxide are used as a surrogate for aerosol particles coated by an organic surfactant. The main objective of this work is to investigate the effect of oxidation by ozone on the photochemical properties of the organic surface. To this end, the UV photodissociation spectrum of the oxidized surface is measured using action spectroscopy,

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during ozonolysis of alkene-terminated SAM on SiO₂ particles (Fig. 2(a)). The absolute ratio between HCHO and HCOOH formation was obtained by simulating the IR-CRDS spectra using the known absorption cross sections for these two molecules.¹⁵ The laser bandwidth (0.1 cm⁻¹) is larger than the bandwidth of individual ro-vibrational transitions in HCHO and HCOOH (0.01 cm⁻¹), which makes the apparent IR-CRDS absorption coefficient depend on concentration in a nonlinear way.¹³ However, the branching ratio obtained from well-isolated HCHO and HCOOH lines with comparable line strengths and intrinsic line widths is expected to be fairly quantitative.

Analysis of the IR-CRDS spectra provides an approximate ratio of HCOOH/HCHO = 0.65 ± 0.20. This ratio represents a time-averaged value over the initial stages of ozonolysis (~10 min). This time is comparable to the half-time for complete film oxidation and gas-SAM equilibration (~10 min). Our data suggest that the HCOOH/HCHO ratio remains approximately the same at later stages of ozonolysis implying that there is no drastic change in the mechanism of POZ decomposition as the organic film ages.

(b) Photolysis

A sample CRDS spectrum obtained during the broadband photolysis of the oxidized surface with a 295 nm long-pass filter is shown in Fig. 2(b). The spectrum unambiguously shows that both formaldehyde and formic acid are produced during photolysis. These molecules were not detected during

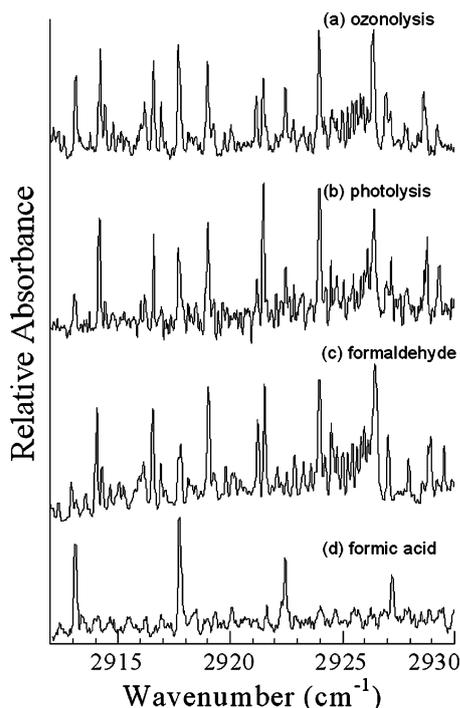


Fig. 2 IR-CRDS spectra of gas products from (a) ozonolysis and (b) photolysis ($\lambda > 295$ nm) of SAM on SiO₂ nanoparticles. Spectrum (b) was obtained after SAM was oxidized by ozone. Reference spectrum of formaldehyde (c) and optoacoustic spectrum of formic acid (d) are plotted for comparison.

UV irradiation of the SAM surface before it was processed with ozone. We also explicitly verified that the observed emission of HCHO and HCOOH was not a result of simple thermal desorption caused by radiative heating of the sample. A K-type thermocouple was attached to the sample cell during photolysis, and no significant temperature elevation at the irradiated surface was observed.

The primary focus of this work is the effect of oxidation of SAM on its photochemical activity in the tropospheric actinic window ($\lambda > 295$ nm). We studied the wavelength-dependent photolysis of the oxidized sample by taking its action photodissociation spectrum in the HCOOH product channel. Specifically, a small section (~1 cm²) of oxidized SAM was photolyzed with a tunable UV source, while keeping the IR-CRDS laser frequency fixed on a strong absorption line of formic acid at ~2917.9 cm⁻¹. Fig. 3 shows the observed change in formic acid concentration as a function of photolysis time at several different photolysis wavelengths. The steady-state is achieved after 10–20 min of photolysis, with the formic acid concentration at steady-state increasing at shorter photolysis wavelengths. We attribute the long time required to reach the steady-state to slow desorption of formic acid from high surface area SiO₂ particles.

The wavelength-dependent relative yield of formic acid corrected for the UV lamp power and quartz cell transmission is plotted in Fig. 4. The action spectrum is characteristic of absorption by peroxy groups, with the photodissociation yield of HCOOH smoothly increasing towards the blue end of the spectrum. It should be noted that significant formation of formic acid is detected at wavelengths where the initial alkene-terminated SAM is stable to photolysis. This observation is in

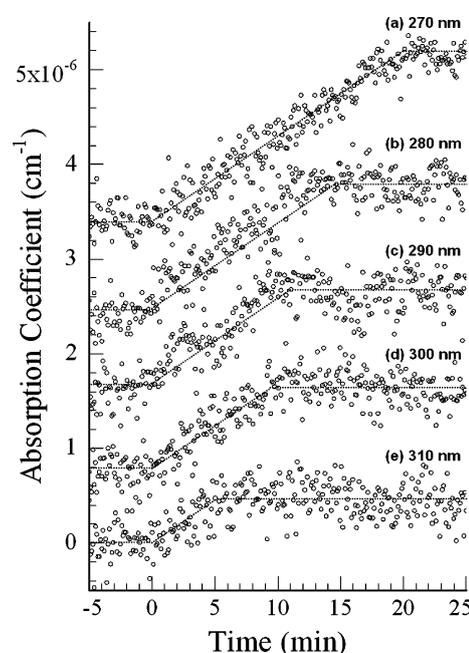


Fig. 3 Formic acid formation during photolysis of ozonized SAM as a function of photolysis time. Photolysis wavelengths are (a) 270 nm, (b) 280 nm, (c) 290 nm, (d) 300 nm, and (e) 310 nm. The baselines are offset, and dotted trace lines are added for clarity.

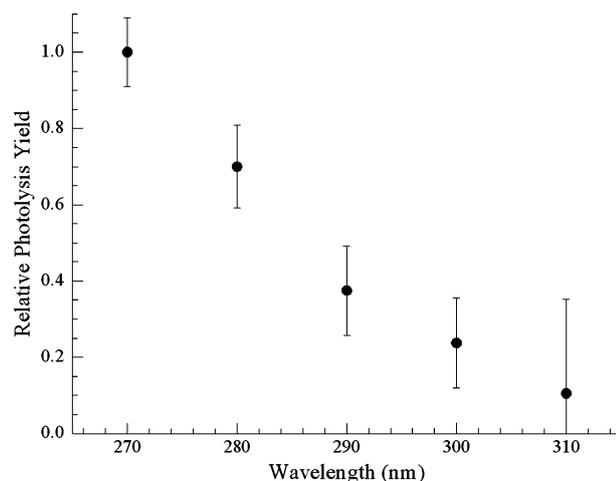


Fig. 4 Relative yield of formic acid from the photolysis of ozonized SAM as a function of the photolysis wavelength (normalized to the UV power).

line with the results from our study of photolysis of ozonized undecylenic acid with the same approach.¹³

We have attempted to characterize the surface products of SAM oxidation and photolysis by electrospray ionization mass spectrometry (ESI-MS). The ESI-MS approach was very helpful in unravelling the mechanism of ozonolysis and photolysis of undecylenic acid reported in ref. 13. Unfortunately, ESI-MS of products of SAM hydrolysis gave incomprehensibly complex mass spectra in both positive and negative ion mode. The authors of ref. 26 had similar difficulties in analyzing the composition of surface products of ozonolysis of SAM on Si wafers.

Discussion

(a) Ozonolysis

The general mechanism of ozonolysis of unsaturated hydrocarbons has been extensively studied by many research groups.^{14,16,17} The effect of light radiation during/after ozonolysis has not been significantly considered and it will be discussed in the latter parts of this paper. Only a brief discussion necessary to support the photolysis results is given in this section.

A schematic diagram of the primary reactions between alkene-terminated SAM and ozone is shown in Fig. 5. The POZ produced in the initial ozone-double bond addition decomposes in one of two ways to produce either formaldehyde and a surface-bound Criegee intermediate (I) or a surface-bound aldehyde (II) and a gas-phase Criegee intermediate (III). Product molecules that are not bound to the surface may then escape from the SAM environment into the gas-phase or undergo secondary reactions within the SAM.

Gas-phase ozonolysis of terminal alkenes is known to produce HCHO, HCOOH, and other volatile products. For example, a study by Neeb *et al.*¹⁸ showed that the branching ratio for the HCHO formation channel in ozonolysis of terminal alkenes at 730 Torr is 0.5, whereas the branching

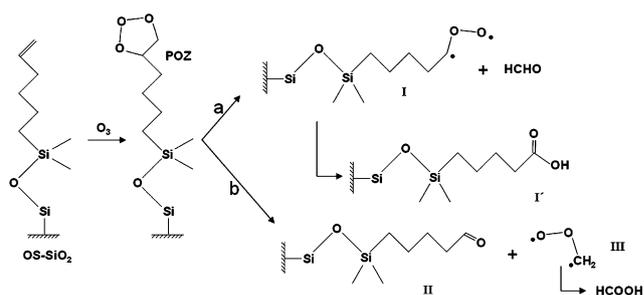


Fig. 5 Primary reactions taking place during ozonolysis of alkene-terminated SAM. OS-SiO₂ stands for the organic silane initially deposited on the SiO₂ surface.

ratio for the HCOOH formation channel through the isomerization of the Criegee intermediate is as low as 0.05. Ozonolysis of alkene-terminated SAM also favors the HCHO product.^{12,14}

Whereas the gas-phase products of ozonolysis of C₆ = SAM on SiO₂ nanoparticles are the same as previously observed, the HCOOH yield measured by the CRDS technique (0.4 ± 0.1) is substantially higher than that measured by mass-spectrometry study (<0.05).¹⁶ We stress that both methods of detection are prone to experimental artifacts: selective wall adsorption in mass-spectrometry and insufficient spectral resolution leading to non-linearity in absorbance in IR-CRDS. In addition, line strengths and pressure broadening coefficients for HCOOH transitions are not known precisely. However, it is possible that reduced stabilization of the escaping Criegee intermediate (III) under the low pressure conditions of this work does produce an increased yield of formic acid.

In view of the lack of strong spatial constraints in the decomposition of singly-substituted POZ, the branching ratio between channels a and b in Fig. 5 should be close to 1:1. The observed <50% yield of HCOOH implies that only a fraction of Criegee intermediate (III) can isomerize to HCOOH. One possibility is that III is rapidly decomposing into HCO, OH, CO₂, CO, H₂, and H₂O. The latter occurs, for example, in the gas phase ozone-propene reaction where yields of (CO + CO₂) were measured as 67% compared to 11% for formic acid.¹⁹ Our CRDS instrument in its present configuration is blind to CO and CO₂.

A more likely fate for III is stabilization followed by secondary reactions with neighboring SAM molecules. Indeed, there are several possible secondary reactions that take place in SAM after POZ decomposition. Criegee intermediates, I and III, can recombine with formaldehyde and surface aldehyde, respectively, to form surface secondary ozonides (sSOZ). This reaction is believed to be very efficient in liquids due to the solvent cage effect,²⁰ and it is conceivable that it also occurs in the semi-liquid SAM environment. The production of gas phase secondary ozonide (gSOZ) from the reaction between formaldehyde and Criegee intermediate (III) is also possible, and there have been several reports of gas phase SOZ formation from ozonation of alkenes in various pressure ranges.^{21–23}

As the SAM oxidation proceeds and surface products accumulate, new reaction channels open up due to the close

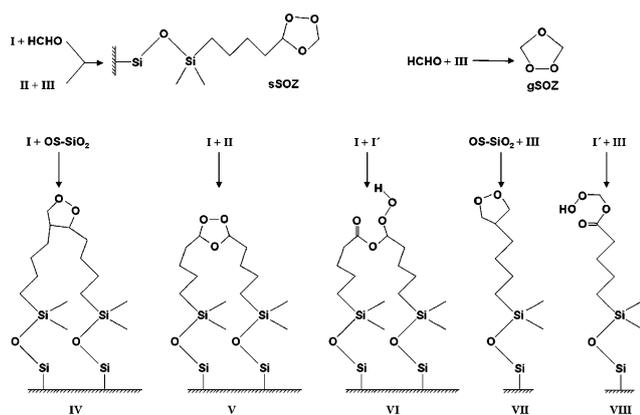


Fig. 6 Possible secondary reactions taking place during ozonolysis of alkene-terminated SAM.

proximity of surface bound molecules in SAM. For example, the association reaction of surface aldehyde (II) with surface Criegee intermediate (I) can form surface SOZ dimer (V) shown in Fig. 6. Criegee radical (I) can also attack double bonds and carboxylic groups in neighboring molecules to form other surface peroxides. Similar selective condensation reactions among the four species, I, I', III, and unreacted terminal alkene (OS-SiO₂) are also possible, again yielding various peroxides (structures IV, VI, VII, and VIII in Fig. 6). Even more complicated surface polymerization reactions initiated by the Criegee intermediates are possible as suggested in recent reports by Dreyfus *et al.*²⁴ and Hung *et al.*²⁵ For example, McIntire and co-workers²⁶ studied ozonolysis of unsaturated SAM on silica wafers using atomic force microscopy, and found unusually large organic aggregates with unknown chemical composition formed on the oxidized surface.

(b) Photolysis

Photolysis experiments lend strong support to the assumption that sSOZ and/or other peroxide products are present on the surface after ozonolysis. As described in the previous section, we found significant amounts of formic acid and formaldehyde produced during photolysis of oxidized SAM. Photolytic elimination of HCHO and HCOOH is not very common, and it strongly restricts the molecular nature of their possible photochemical precursors. For example, direct photochemical formation of HCHO and HCOOH from the photolysis of surface acid (I') and surface aldehyde (II) cannot occur at these excitation frequencies. Excitation of surface peroxides (IV–VIII) would sever the O–O bond but the resulting rearrangement products would remain attached to the surface and/or produce hydroxyl radicals. Although photolysis of gSOZ could give rise to both HCHO and HCOOH, gSOZ should be removed by pumping on the flow cell for several hours before starting the photolysis experiments. In addition, SOZ of ethene may not be stable enough to remain in the system for so long.¹⁸

The most likely source of these photoproducts is photolysis of sSOZ. The suggested mechanism is shown in Fig. 7. Because the O–O bonds in SOZ molecules are relatively weak, they are

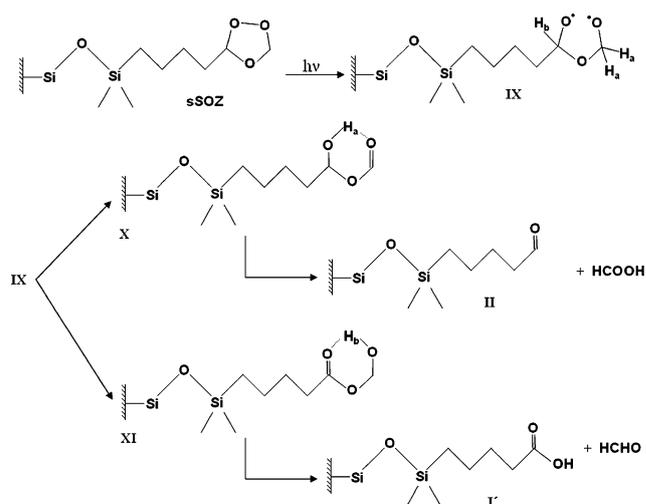


Fig. 7 Mechanism of sSOZ photolysis leading to photochemical release of HCHO and HCOOH.

easily broken by UV photons^{27–29} to produce an intermediate (IX). Rearrangement of IX can proceed *via* two possible pathways: 1,4-H_a shift and 3,5-H_b shift forming intermediate species, X and XI, respectively. Depending on the H-transfer pathway, formic acid (from X through H_a migration) or formaldehyde (from XI through H_b migration) are produced together with surface aldehyde (II) and surface acid (I').

The large delay between oxidation of the sample and photolysis experiments (several hours) implies that sSOZ in SAM do not decompose on timescales of hours at room temperature. Such high stability of substituted SOZ compounds is not unusual. For example, SOZ obtained by ozonolysis of 2,3-dimethylbutene remains stable for days in solutions³⁰ and for hours in the gas-phase at room temperature.²⁹ SOZ of many other singly-substituted molecules have been successfully prepared and characterized by analytical techniques, some of which require heating the sample (GC/MS and ESI-MS).^{21,22,29,31}

A previous study of the photolysis of 3,5-dimethyl-1,2,4-trioxolane (secondary ozonide of 2-butene)²⁹ showed that the SOZ photolytic decomposition mechanism is wavelength-dependent. The authors reported that photolysis by hard UV radiation (ArF laser, 193 nm) produced many different products, including formic acid, whereas photolysis by mild UV radiation (N₂ laser, 337 nm) was a much slower process, which could not compete with SOZ oligomerization occurring on the reactor walls under their experimental conditions. Although sSOZ oligomerization cannot be ruled out, we do not observe a change in the HCHO/HCOOH ratio over the action spectrum (Fig. 4) wavelength range of 270–310 nm.

The surface bound hydroperoxides (VI and VIII) are also expected to photolyze by cleavage of the O–OH bond releasing OH and/or H₂O and leaving surface products on the surface. The highly reactive OH radical is likely to either add to double bonds remaining on the SAM surface or abstract an H-atom from a neighboring chain. Subsequent reactions with trace O₂ molecules in the buffer gas-flow will produce surface-bound RO₂ radicals. We cannot rule out the possibility that one of

the secondary reactions involving RO₂ radicals can generate HCHO and HCOOH as secondary products of photolysis; more information on photochemistry of hydroperoxides in the condensed organic phase is necessary to address this question.

(c) Atmospheric implications

In spite of the incomplete characterization of the surface products in this work, it is clear that oxidation of unsaturated organic films by ozone has a strong effect on the photochemical properties of the resulting surface. The photodissociation cross section of the oxidized film is characteristic of absorption by peroxidic groups. This observation has important implications for photochemical aging of both primary organic aerosol (POA), which is emitted directly in particulate form, and secondary organic aerosol (SOA), formed by condensation of low volatility products of atmospheric oxidation of hydrocarbons. Indeed, a substantial fraction of POA in urban areas comes from cooking emissions^{32,33} containing an array of unsaturated organics such as oleic acid, linoleic acid, cholesterol derivatives, etc. Oxidation of these unsaturated molecules will convert them into more photoactive forms permitting further processing induced by solar radiation.

SOA formation from monoterpene oxidation by ozone has been extensively investigated,³⁴ and its aging by UV-radiation is likely to be equally important to the POA case, especially for SOA generated by ozonolysis in the dark. Several research groups are currently working in this important area.^{35,36} Presto *et al.*³⁵ reported a significant effect of UV-radiation on the yield reduction of SOA in terpene ozonolysis and concluded that SOA yield is likely to depend on actinic flux. Our preliminary measurements of the photochemical properties of SOA generated by ozonolysis of α -pinene and *d*-limonene reveal even stronger photoactivity than reported here for alkene-terminated SAM. The results on SOA photolysis will be reported elsewhere.

Photochemical processing of organic particles cannot only change their chemical properties but also serve as a potential source of free organic aldehydes and carboxylic acids. Verification of this hypothesis is an ongoing research effort in our group, and it requires a careful quantification of photodissociation cross-sections of model POA and SOA particles generated under realistic atmospheric conditions.

Conclusions

Ozonolysis of assembled organic monolayers deposited on SiO₂ nanoparticles and photolysis of the resulting oxidized surface have been studied. Such SiO₂ nanoparticles are characterized by a high surface-to-volume ratio that is ideal for investigation of surface-specific reactions occurring at the organic aerosol–air interface. The observed pattern of products implies rich chemistry resulting in the formation of complex oxygenated products on the SAM surface. Some of these products are photoactive in the tropospheric actinic window ($\lambda > 295$ nm), and release formaldehyde, formic acid, and possibly other small molecules in the gas-phase during UV irradiation. The wavelength dependence of formic acid yield strongly suggests the presence of peroxides such as secondary ozonides on the oxidized SAM surface. The main implication

of this work is the potential role of solar radiation in photoaging of primary and secondary organic aerosols.

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