

**Aqueous-phase
reactions of a
methoxy-phenol from
biomass burning**

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Aqueous-phase photochemical oxidation and direct photolysis of vanillin – a model compound of methoxy-phenols from biomass burning

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Abstract

We present here experimental results on aqueous-phase (A) photochemical oxidation (with UV and OH radicals generated from H_2O_2 photolysis) and (B) direct photolysis (with only UV irradiation) of a methoxy-phenol, vanillin (VL), as a model compound from biomass burning. Both on-line aerosol mass spectrometric (AMS) characterization and off-line chemical analyses were performed. AMS analyses of dried atomized droplets of the bulk reacting mixtures showed that VL almost entirely evaporates during the drying process. Large amounts of organic mass remained in the particle phase after reactions under both conditions. Under condition (A), AMS measured organic mass first increased rapidly and then decreased, attributable to the formation of non-volatile products and subsequent formation of smaller and volatile products, respectively. The oxygen-to-carbon (O : C) ratio of the products reached 1.5 after about 80 min, but dropped substantially thereafter. In contrast, organic mass increased slowly under condition (B). The O : C ratio reached 1.0 after 180 min. In off-line analyses, small oxygenates were detected under condition (A), while hydroxylated products and dimers of VL were detected under condition (B). Particle hygroscopic growth factor (GF) and cloud condensation nuclei (CCN) activity of the reacting mixtures were found to be dependent on both organic volume fraction and the degree of oxygenation of organics. Results show that (1) aqueous-phase processes can lead to the retention of a large portion of the organic mass in the particle phase; (2) once retained, this portion of organic mass significantly changes the hygroscopicity and CCN activity of the aerosol particles; (3) intensive photochemical oxidation gave rise to an O : C ratio as high as 1.5 but the ratio decreased as further oxidation led to smaller and more volatile products; and (4) polymerization occurred with direct photolysis, resulting in high-molecular-weight products of a yellowish color. This study demonstrates that aqueous-phase reactions of a methoxy-phenol can lead to substantial amount of secondary organic aerosol (SOA) formation. Given the vast amount of biomass burning input globally, model representation of either the SOA budget or their subsequent ef-

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fects would not be adequate if the contribution of SOA formation from aqueous-phase reactions of methoxy-phenols is not considered.

1 Introduction

Reduction in saturated vapor pressure during chemical reactions, either by increasing the degree of oxygenation as in oxidation or increasing molecular weights as in polymerization (Kroll and Seinfeld, 2008), is the key to secondary organic aerosol (SOA) formation. Current models tend to underestimate the amount of SOA production (Heald et al., 2005). To close the gap, recent investigations have been searching for either missing precursors or mechanisms (Carlton et al., 2009) that would lead to products with substantially lower saturated vapor pressures than their precursors. Consideration of intermediately volatile organic compounds (IVOCs) as the missing SOA precursors (Donahue et al., 2006; Robinson et al., 2007) can possibly explain part of the underestimation. However, current studies have focused almost exclusively on the fossil-fuel-related long-chain alkanes in the IVOC range (Presto et al., 2010), which are precursors with no oxygen atoms in their structures. Some partially oxidized organic compounds whose saturated vapor pressures also fall in the IVOC range have not been adequately investigated. As for missing mechanisms, aqueous-phase oxidation has been advocated to be an important contributor to SOA in conditions where cloud, fog or wet aerosol particles are present (Blando and Turpin, 2000). There are numerous studies on aqueous-phase reactions but their focus has been limited to small aldehydes such as glyoxal and glycolaldehyde (Ervens et al., 2011), and recently pinene oxidation products (Lee et al., 2011).

Biomass burning is an important source of primary organic aerosol (POA) (de Gouw and Jimenez, 2009). It is also a source of SOA precursors (Grieshop et al., 2009; Cubison et al., 2011) because of the numerous organic compounds with a wide range of volatilities emitted. Cellulose, hemi-cellulose, and lignin are major constituents of biomass, and biomass burning organic aerosol (BBOA) still carries some signatures

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linking to these phyto-macromolecules even after extensive thermal degradation. Levoglucosan from cellulose or hemi-cellulose and methoxy-phenolic compounds from lignin have been used as markers of BBOA for a long time (Simoneit, 2002). As an abundant BBOA component and a well-known BBOA maker, levoglucosan was believed to largely exist in the particle phase, but recent studies have suggested that it is semi-volatile, and its stability is being questioned because it can partition back to the gas phase for photochemical aging (Hennigan et al., 2010) and can also be oxidized in aqueous phase (Hoffmann et al., 2009). On the other hand, phenols and methoxy-phenols can contribute to 20–40 % of particulate mass from burning hardwood and softwood (Hawthorne et al., 1989). Some methoxy-phenolic compounds will partition between the gas phase and the particle phase due to their relatively high saturated vapor pressures. For example, vanillin ($C_8H_8O_3$, 4-hydroxy-3-methoxybenzaldehyde, CAS#121–33-5) has a saturated vapor pressure of 1.18×10^{-4} mmHg at 298 K (Yaws, 1994), equivalent to a saturation concentration of approximately $10^3 \mu g m^{-3}$, and belongs to the IVOC range (Donahue et al., 2006). Its water solubility is $1.1 g (100 mL)^{-1}$ H_2O at 298 K (Budavari et al., 1996), which puts it in the slightly water soluble category. The physical Henry's law constant of vanillin is thus estimated to be 4.65×10^5 Matm $^{-1}$ at 298 K (Yaws, 1994), which is very close to the effective Henry's law constant of glyoxal (Ip et al., 2009). This means that vanillin, like glyoxal, will preferably be in the condensed phase if liquid water is available. In fact, it was observed that the efficiency with which fog water scavenges methoxy-phenolic volatile compounds such as vanillin was higher than 90 % (Collett Jr. et al., 2008). Unlike glyoxal which self-polymerizes more favorably than evaporates, vanillin is driven to the gas phase upon water evaporation (see discussions later), because of its intermediately volatile nature. Upon dilution in the atmosphere, the intermediately volatile or semi-volatile species such as vanillin in fine particles will at least partly evaporate, controlled presumably by absorptive partitioning. If coarse-mode droplets bearing a large amount of liquid water are available, the vapor-phase vanillin is then able to dissolve into the large droplets because of its

slight solubility in water, resulting in a bimodal distribution. Indeed, this bimodal distribution of vanillin was clearly observed in a recent study (Wang et al., 2011).

We present experimental results of aqueous-phase reactions of a methoxy-phenolic model compound, vanillin, under two conditions: (A) UV (254 nm) + H₂O₂ and (B) UV (254 nm) only. The aqueous bulk reacting mixture was partially atomized and dried for on-line analyses. The experimental setup, resembling a cloud-phase reaction/evaporation process, allowed us to characterize the evolution of organics in both the bulk aqueous solution and the particulate organics that remained after drying. The organics in the particles and in the solution during reactions were characterized by on-line aerosol mass spectrometry (AMS) and off-line analyses, respectively. Vanillin evaporated, as noted before, but large amounts of organic mass retained after reactions under both conditions (A) and (B), indicating the ability to retain slightly volatile organic species in the particle phase by aqueous-phase reactions. Substantial differences in product identities and reaction kinetics were observed between these two conditions. Furthermore, the water uptake ability and cloud condensation activity were also monitored with a hygroscopic tandem differential mobility analyzer (HTDMA) and a cloud condensation nuclei counter (CCNC). The hygroscopicity of particles after reactions was significantly altered, and will be discussed in conjunction with the degree of oxygenation of particulate organics at different time of the reactions.

2 Experimental

2.1 Aqueous-phase reaction and control experiments

The reaction apparatus was modified from Lee et al. (2011) and is shown in Supplement Fig. S1. A TSI 3076 constant output atomizer was modified to include: (a) a low-pressure mercury UV (254 nm) lamp (Pen-Ray, UVP, Canada); (b) a circulating sample collection system; (c) a magnetic stirrer; and (d) a water bath with an aluminum foil cover to keep out natural light during the experiments. An aqueous solution

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of 0.1 mM ammonium sulfate (AS, Sigma, $\geq 99.0\%$) and 0.1 mM vanillin (VL, Sigma-Aldrich, 99 %), with or without H_2O_2 (Sigma-Aldrich, 34.5–36.5 wt %), was continuously atomized to generate particles, which passed through a diffusion drier (BMI, Haywood, CA, USA) before going into the AMS, HTDMA and CCNc. The conditions and measurements in control (C_1 to C_4) and actual experiments (A_1 to A_9 and B_1 to B_7) are shown in Table 1. In some experiments (A_9 and B_7), aqueous solution samples were collected at different time intervals for off-line analyses. In the control experiments with AS only and the UV lamp on (C_1), AS and H_2O_2 with the UV lamp on (C_2), AS and VL without UV (C_3), and AS, VL and H_2O_2 without UV (C_4), the mass fractions of organics were normally less than 5 % after drying, with the rest of particle mass being AS. The concentrations of sulfate, ammonium and organics, as well as the ratios of organics to sulfate in those control experiments without any one of the critical elements (UV, H_2O_2 , or VL) of the reactions are showed in Fig. S2. Results from experiments C_1 and C_2 showed that the mass contribution from the background (water) was negligible. Results from experiment C_3 indicated that VL evaporated almost completely during drying if no reaction occurred and those from experiment C_4 indicated that there was little retainable product form between VL and H_2O_2 , or the reaction between them is too slow for the time scale of the experiments (3 h).

2.2 AMS analysis

The high-resolution time-of-flight aerosol mass spectrometer (HR-ToF-AMS) has been described in detail elsewhere (DeCarlo et al., 2006). Briefly, particles leaving the diffusion dryer enter a set of aerodynamic lens for particle focusing and a particle time-of-flight (pToF) chamber for sizing. They then arrive at a heater with a temperature of 600°C for vaporization. Vapors of the non-refractory (NR) components are then ionized by electrons emitted by a tungsten filament. Ions are then transmitted to an ion time-of-flight (iToF) chamber for mass analysis and finally detected by a multi-channel plate (MCP) detector. In all the experiments, the HR-ToF-AMS was operated under two modes, each for 2 min. The first mode was operated under a V-shaped iToF (for lower

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mass resolving power but with higher sensitivity) plus pToF (for sizing). The second mode was operated under a W-shaped iToF (for higher mass resolving power but with lower sensitivity). The AMS data were analyzed using two toolkits, SQUIRREL and PIKA (Sueper, 2012), which are based on Igor Pro (Wavemetrics, Lake Oswego, OR).

Based on previous studies (Zhang et al., 2005; Li et al., 2011b), the fragmentation table was modified for m/z 18 (or H_2O^+ ion in W mode) and m/z 28 (or CO^+ ion in the W mode) for organics. Details of the modification can be found in the Supplement (Sect. 3.1, Fig. S4 and Table S1). Background mass spectra from control experiment C_1 (Sect. 3.2 in Supplement) were also subtracted from mass spectra of experiments to obtain representative AMS mass spectra of the particle-phase organics formed during reactions (see Sect. 3.1 below). The AMS measures organics, sulfate, ammonium, nitrate and chloride. Nitrate and chloride in our experiments were negligible as expected. We do not exclude the possibility of organic sulfate formation during our experiments. However, due to the high temperature (600°C) and high energy ionization, even present, organic sulfate was likely fragmented to give sulfur-containing ions that are similar to inorganic sulfate, and was mostly counted as inorganic sulfate contribution. Therefore, the sulfate content is considered to be constant in the bulk solution during the experiments and will be used to normalize the measured organic content (Lee et al., 2012). Any fluctuations in the measured sulfate content were assumed to be due to the fluctuations in particle generation and the difference in collection efficiency (CE) as a result of the different organic contents of particles (Middlebrook et al., 2012).

2.3 OH concentration estimation

Under condition (A), H_2O_2 photolysis was used to generate OH radicals. In the H_2O_2 decay experiments, H_2O_2 concentrations were measured at different time intervals using a colorimetric method (Allen et al., 1952). A typical calibration curve is shown in Fig. S5. The decay rate (k_{obs}) of H_2O_2 was determined to be $1.9 \times 10^{-4} \text{ s}^{-1}$ (Fig. S6), similar to those reported in a previous study (An et al., 2001) that used the same brand

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and model of UV lamp. A photolysis rate constant of $1.0 \times 10^{-4} \text{ s}^{-1}$ was determined by taking into account reactions with other reactive oxygen species such as OH and HO₂ radicals (see Supplement Sect. 4, Table S2 and Fig. S6 for details). The OH concentration in the aqueous solution was estimated by two approaches (see Supplement Sect. 4 and Figs. S7 and S8 for details): (1) assuming a pseudo-steady-state of OH radicals, and (2) solving the stiff ordinary differential equations (ODEs) with no constraint on the OH radical concentration. The first approach resulted in an OH concentration of about $7.2 \times 10^{-12} \text{ M}$, while the second one gave a concentration of about $7.0 \times 10^{-12} \text{ M}$. The OH concentration in the aqueous solution is thus believed to be one order of magnitude higher than that in cloud water (Fig. S7), which is generally in the order of 10^{-13} M (Warneck, 2003; Ervens et al., 2013), but is close to that in fog or wet aerosol particles (Ervens et al., 2011).

2.4 Off-line analyses

Aqueous-phase samples collected at different time intervals were analyzed using three off-line techniques. An ultra-performance liquid chromatograph (UPLC) with a diode array detector (DAD) was used to quantify the reactant VL and an expected product, vanillic acid (VA), in experiments A_1 to A_3 and B_1 to B_3. An UPLC with electrospray ionization (ESI) coupled with a time-of-flight mass spectrometric detector (ToF-MS) was used to identify reaction products that have relatively large molecular weights, i.e., mainly those from condition (B). Product identification with derivatizations prior to gas chromatography and mass spectrometry (GC-MS) was also conducted for small oxygenated products, which were mainly found under condition (A). Two derivatization methods were employed. The first one uses the BF₃/butanol to convert carboxylic acids to butyl esters (Li and Yu, 2005). The second one uses pentafluorophenylhydrazine (PFPH) to convert carbonyl compounds to their PFPH derivatives (Dron et al., 2008). Details of off-line analyses can be found in the Supplement Sect. 5.

2.5 HTDMA and CCNc analyses

During experiments A_4 to A_8 and B_1 to B_6, particles leaving the diffusion dryer were characterized by an HTDMA system (BMI, Haywood, CA, USA). Dried particles entered a differential mobility analyzer (DMA1) operating under dry conditions and left DMA1 with a mono-disperse particle size with mobility diameter, $D_{\text{dry}} = 100$ nm. They then entered a humidifier with a controlled relative humidity (RH) of 90 % to effect hygroscopic growth. After growth, the size distribution over the mobility diameter D_{90} was measured with a second DMA (DMA2) operating in scanning mode and coupled with a mixing condensation particle counter (MCPC). The hygroscopic growth factor, GF_{90} , defined as the ratio of the humidified (at 90 % RH) particle diameter to the dry particle diameter, was then obtained.

$$GF_{90} = \frac{D_{90}}{D_{\text{dry}}} \quad (1)$$

In the CCN measurements (A_7 to A_8 and B_4 to B_6) for the cloud condensation activity, dry particles leaving the diffusion dryer passed through a TSI (Shoreview, MN) DMA and were split into two streams. One stream was directed to a TSI water-based CPC and the other to the CCN counter (CCNc, model CCN-200, DMT, Boulder, CO). The particle number concentration (N_{CN}) was obtained by the CPC. In the CCNc, an effective water vapor supersaturation (ss) of 0.1 % was set. Particles that had a critical supersaturation below the set value were then activated and grew into droplets. The concentration (N_{CCN}) and size distribution of activated droplets were detected by an optical particle counter at the bottom exit of the CCNc column.

The CCN activation of the particles was examined by plotting the CCN efficiency against the diameter (D_p) of dry particles selected by a DMA and counted by a CPC. The CCN efficiency is defined as the ratio of the concentration of the activated droplets to that of the dry particles ($N_{\text{CCN}}/N_{\text{CN}}$). After making a correction for doubly charged particles, each CCN efficiency spectrum was fitted with a cumulative Gaussian distribution function using a non-linear least-square fitting routine. The D_{50} , indicating 50 %

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of the particles at this diameter are activated, was then obtained. Since the supersaturation was fixed during the experiment, changes in D_{50} would reflect changes in the CCN activity of the particles, which is related to the particle chemical composition.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 AMS organic fractions and mass spectra

Aqueous-phase reactions under both conditions (A) and (B) were triggered by UV light. Under condition (A) when H_2O_2 was present, OH radicals were generated and oxidation of VL proceeded mainly via reactions with OH. Under condition (B) when H_2O_2 was absent, direct photolysis of VL was the main reaction route (Benitez et al., 1997), although a small amount of reactive oxygen species including H_2O_2 was very likely generated (Anastasio et al., 1997). The differences between these two conditions can be clearly seen from the increases in AMS-measured particulate organic mass concentration (green line) and the ratio of organic to sulfate mass ($\text{Org}/\text{SO}_4^{2-}$) (black circles) in Fig. S2 (for experiments A_1 to A_3 in the upper panel and B_1 to B_3 in the lower panel). Shown in Fig. 1 are the 10 min running average $\text{Org}/\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ratios for all the experiments (A_1 to A_8 in panel A, and B_1 to B_6 in panel B), together with the average mass fractions of organics (green) and ammonium sulfate (red). Under condition (A), the $\text{Org}/\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ratio increased rapidly and reached 1.58 (the original $\text{VL}/\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ mass ratio of the reacting solution) in around 30 min. The overshooting of the $\text{Org}/\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ratio up to 1.80 was probably because addition of oxygen mass due to functionalization outweighed the loss of VL and/or volatile products during the photochemical oxidation. Note that the usage of the default relative ionization efficiency of organics (1.4) may introduce an uncertainty of $\sim 20\%$ and $\sim 15\%$ in the estimation of the organic and the sulfate concentrations (Bahreini et al., 2009), respectively, which would result by error propagation in an uncertainty of $\sim 25\%$ for the highest $\text{Org}/\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ratio. After around 40 min, the $\text{Org}/\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ratio started to decrease slowly. After around 3 h, the $\text{Org}/\text{SO}_4^{2-}$

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ratio fell to around 0.1, indicating that the organics were mostly converted to volatile products by extensive fragmentation.

Under condition (B), the $\text{Org}/\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ratio increased steadily throughout the 3 h reaction period. It reached around 1.0 and the organic mass fraction was around 40 % by the end of the experiments. Hence, without a high OH radical concentration, direct photolysis of VL by UV light with a wavelength of 254 nm for 3 h resulted in the retention of only approximately 60 % (the highest $\text{Org}/\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ratio of around 1.0 divided by original $\text{VL}/\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ratio of 1.58) of the organic mass in the particle phase after reactions and drying. The rest is likely unreacted VL or its volatile products, both of which would evaporate during the drying process.

In the high-resolution mass spectra obtained under the W mode (Fig. 2a), ions with high m/z values were present in the first 10 min of reactions under condition (A). For example, the peak of m/z 137 (see grey arrow in panel A) was dominated by an ion with a formula of $\text{C}_7\text{H}_5\text{O}_3^+$. This m/z value has been observed in biomass burning organic aerosols and was assigned to lignin-related ions with methoxy-phenolic structures (Li et al., 2011b). Therefore, this ion is believed to be a fragment of the ring-retaining products that still possess the methoxy-phenolic structure. After 40 min, the ions with high m/z values became less abundant. Instead, the ions of CO^+ (m/z 28) and CO_2^+ (m/z 44) dominated. At 120 min, these two ions became overwhelmingly dominant in the mass spectrum. In contrast, the ions with high m/z values were still of relatively high fractions under condition (B) throughout the 3 h experiment (Fig. 2b). The peak at m/z 137 remained observable even at 120 min. The differences in the evolution of mass spectral features under these two conditions indicate that the final products that retained in the particle phase formed under these two conditions were substantially different.

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3.2 Degree of oxygenation

The oxygen-to-carbon (O : C) and hydrogen-to-carbon (H : C) ratios are shown in Fig. 3 for both conditions. The O : C ratio under condition (A) increased for the first 80 min before it decreased. This appears to contradict the extensively oxidative environment during the experiments. However, since the AMS-measured organic products were only those that remained in the particle phase, some of the more oxygenated products, for example, formic acid (O : C = 2) from fragmentation reactions, as a very oxygenated and volatile product of the oxidation, may have escaped from the particle phase and evaded detection by the AMS. A similar fragmentation-induced formation of “less oxygenated” SOA was also observed with a decrease in O : C during the gas-phase photochemical oxidation of biomass burning organic aerosols (Heringa et al., 2011). On the other hand, mineralization to CO₂ as the end product may also have caused a substantial decrease in the O : C of the particulate organics measured. Although not measured, CO₂ very likely formed during the experiment because the O : C at 80 min had already increased to 1.5, approaching the upper limit for the commonly observed particulate organic species (e.g., 2.0 for oxalic acid). The O : C ratio under condition (B) increased, first rapidly and then slowly during the 3 h of reactions. This indicates that oxidation under condition (B) was not as complete as that under condition (A), because O : C under condition (B) was only ~ 1.0 at the end of the experiments. Therefore, the final organic products that retained in the particle phase under condition (B) are believed to be less oxygenated than those under condition (A). The H : C ratio decreased slightly under both conditions at the beginning of the experiments. While the H : C ratio was relatively stable throughout the rest of the experiment under condition (B), it increased slightly under condition (A) near the end of the experiment.

3.3 Kinetics of vanillin decay

The reactant VL and an expected product vanillic acid (VA) were quantified using standard compounds and offline UPLC-DAD (see Supplement Sect. 5.1, Figs. S9 and S10).

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Figure 4a and b shows the ratios of these two compounds (green solid circles and red solid triangles) to sulfate (assumed constant at 0.1 mM) during experiments under conditions (A) and (B), respectively. Under condition (A), VL/SO_4^{2-} decreased rapidly during the first 30 min after the UV lamp was switched on, coinciding with the rapid increase in Org/SO_4^{2-} revealed by the AMS measurements. VA/SO_4^{2-} increased slightly in the first 10 min but decreased to almost zero after 30 min, suggesting that VA was only an important product at the beginning of the experiment under condition (A) but was almost completely converted to other products after 30 min of photochemical oxidation. Under condition (B), VL/SO_4^{2-} decreased slowly, corresponding to a similarly slow increase in Org/SO_4^{2-} observed in the AMS measurements. VA remained as a minor product during the reactions under condition (B), suggesting some other products (see below) were formed during the consumption of VL.

Figure 4c and d shows the decay rate (k_{obs} , s^{-1}) of VL under conditions (A) and (B), respectively. The decay rate under condition (A) was one order of magnitude larger than that under condition (B). Using the estimated OH steady-state concentration (7.0×10^{-12} M), a bimolecular reaction rate constant of VL and OH under condition (A) was estimated to be $4 \times 10^8 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ (see Supplement Sect. 4 and Fig. S8 for details). For condition (B), reactions were likely triggered by activation of the aromatic VL by UV light, followed by production of a smaller amount of H_2O_2 (Anastasio et al., 1997) than under condition (A), which in turn generated a much lower concentration of OH radicals than under condition (A). In the initial stage of the experiment (i.e. the first 60 min), the decay rate was determined to be $2.3 \times 10^{-4} \text{ s}^{-1}$. This decay rate is close to that ($3.6 \times 10^{-4} \text{ s}^{-1}$) in Benitez et al. (1997), although polychromatic light (strongest line at 366 nm) was used in that study.

3.4 Other reaction products

Mass spectra of some of the products identified by UPLC-ESI-ToF-MS and GC-MS are shown in Figs. 5 and 6, respectively. Extractive ion chromatograms from UPLC-

ESI-ToF-MS are shown in Fig. S11. All mass spectra are shown in the Supplement in Fig. S12 (for UPLC-ESI-ToF-MS) and Fig. S13 (for GC-MS).

Using the UPLC-ESI-ToF-MS, no major products were detected in samples under condition (A), probably due to poor separation in LC and inefficient ionization by ESI for those products formed under condition (A). As discussed earlier in Sect. 3.1, ring-opening and highly oxygenated products with low molecular weights (e.g., small carboxylic acids or aldehydes) are expected to form under extensive photochemical oxidation under condition (A). Indeed, it is not efficient to separate small oxygenates in a reverse-phase LC column (Buszewski and Noga, 2012) and to ionize small oxygenates that are too hydrophilic by ESI (Cech et al., 2001). Multiple products were observed by the UPLC-ToF-MS in samples under condition (B), and they are listed in Table S3. A number of monomeric products with retention times of around 10 min (Fig. S11), including B168_a (Fig. 5a), B168_b, and B168_c with a molecular formula of $C_8H_8O_4$, as well as B184_a and B184_b with a molecular formula of $C_8H_8O_5$, were observed after 40 min of reaction under condition (B). Among them, B168_b is believed to be VA as detected by the UPLC-DAD method, based on its fragmentation pattern which showed a CO_2 loss (Li et al., 2011a). Similarly, the observed product B184_a (Fig. 5b) is also believed to bear a carboxylic group based on its fragmentation pattern which showed a CO_2 loss (Table S3). Other isomers might be di- or tri-hydroxylated products with one or two more hydroxyl groups (in addition to the original one) at the three available positions on the aromatic ring.

Seven products with longer retention times (32–35 min) were observed after 120 min of reaction under condition (B), as shown in Table S3 and Fig. S11. The mass spectra of these products are shown in Fig. S12. The oligomeric product B302_a (Fig. 5c) is believed to be a dimer formed via radical-radical polymerization, similar to reactions of other phenols (Sun et al., 2010). Mass spectra of other observed oligomers contain less information on fragmentation for further structural elucidation thus the structures of those products are not proposed and their formation mechanisms remain unknown. Nevertheless, those products have similarly high conjugation as B302_a because their

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double bond equivalency (DBE) is higher than (or at least close to) that of B302_a (Table S3). Additionally, a yellowish color was observed for solutions after experiments under condition (B) while it was not observed under condition (A). This observation suggests that the highly conjugated products as detected by the UPLC-ToF-MS might be responsible for the light absorption of the solution.

From samples under condition (A), four small carboxylic acids including glyoxylic acid, oxalic acid, malonic acid, and pyruvic acid, as well as two aldehydes including formaldehyde and glyoxal, were identified using the two aforementioned derivatization methods prior to GC-MS analyses (Fig. S13). Figure 6 shows the standard and sample mass spectra of derivatized oxalic acid (Fig. 6a), glyoxylic acid (Fig. 6b), and glyoxal (Fig. 6c). These small oxygenates were detected in samples at 80–120 min after the start of the reactions. The formation of these small oxygenates confirms that with intensive photochemical oxidation under condition (A), vanillin molecules were extensively fragmented (ring-opening) to yield smaller and more functionalized products.

From the above product information, it can be concluded that the reaction pathways under conditions (A) and (B) are very different. Under condition (A), photochemical oxidation may proceed via ring-opening pathways that lead mainly to small oxygenates, resulting in a very high degree of oxygenation as indicated by the O : C ratios seen in the AMS results (Fig. 3a). Under condition (B), reactions seemed to occur mostly via ring-retaining pathways, resulting in the addition of one or more hydroxyl groups. Dimerization of vanillin also occurred under this condition. These two reaction pathways under condition (B) resulted in a mild increase in the O : C ratios, consistent with the AMS measurements (Fig. 3b). However, all the products tentatively identified by the UPLC-ToF-MS have O : C ratios far below 0.9 at 120 min, the O : C ratio obtained from AMS measurements. The products observed by the UPLC-ToF-MS represented those in the solution, and some of them (with low O : C ratios) might not retain in the particles. Those that retained (but not identified using the current techniques) might have higher O : C ratios than those observed by the UPLC-ToF-MS method. It is possible that some small oxygenates with high O : C ratios were also produced under condition (B), al-

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mixing rule. The details of hygroscopic growth factor estimation are shown in Sect. 6 of the Supplement. The hygroscopic growth factors of organic products under the two conditions as a function of the O : C ratio are shown in Fig. 8. Only data points with organic mass fraction > 30 % (volume fraction > ~ 35 %) were included in this plot to avoid overwhelmingly dominant contribution by AS. Also shown in Fig. 8 is the fitted line from the literature (Massoli et al., 2010). A linear dependence of GF_{org} on the O : C ratio was observed in our experiments under both conditions. But the slopes and the intercepts are quite different from those in Massoli et al. (2010). Firstly, for the OH oxidation experiments under condition (A), the slope is much smaller than that in Massoli et al. (2010). This may be because the range of O : C values from our experiments in condition (A) is much higher (generally > 0.5 for data points with organic mass fraction > 30 %) than those from chamber or field studies as in Massoli et al. (2010). The data points in Massoli et al. (2010) also started to level off with O : C > 0.8. Indeed, if the O : C ratio keeps increasing up to 2.0 (e.g., for oxalic acid), neither of these two linear relationships would hold because the GF_{90} values of smaller carboxylic acids such as oxalic acid are generally less than 1.5 (Peng et al., 2001). For experiments conducted under condition (B), the GF_{org} was substantially lower than in the Massoli et al. (2010) and under condition (A) in our study. This indicates that the relationship between GF and O : C ratio of those highly conjugated organic compounds such as those formed from condition (B) and generally present in BBOA may be substantially different from that for chamber SOA.

3.6 Aqueous-phase processing

To relate the current experiments to ambient aqueous droplets, we now compare the time scales of these experiments to the atmospheric life times of clouds and VL. The OH concentration in clouds is usually in the order of 10^{-13} M (Warneck, 2003; Ervens et al., 2011), while the OH concentration in our experiments was one order of magnitude higher. With a concentration of 1.84×10^{-13} M (Warneck, 2003), the time scale equivalent to our experimental time (3 h) would be ~ 110 h for a similar OH exposure

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under ambient conditions. Given a cloud condensation-evaporation cycle of 0.5–3 h and ~ 10 cycles of cloud nuclei (Warneck, 2000), our experimental time scale for condition (A) was a few times that of the typical cloud life time. Therefore, the first 40–60 min of the experiments under condition (A) would be more relevant to ambient clouds. Oxidation in cloud is effective when biomass burning aerosols are activated to form cloud droplets, where semi-volatile methoxy-phenolic compounds can be dissolved into the aqueous phase and a reasonably high concentration of OH can be accommodated by the droplets. Between the cloud formation cycles, water evaporates and only aerosol particles remain (together with oxidation products from the previous cloud cycle). In that case, oxidation reactions in the gas phase may be more important than in the particle phase since vanillin exists preferably in the gas phase.

For condition (B), on the other hand, oxidation reaction is not affected by the availability of OH from direct photolysis of H_2O_2 . However, it is very likely that trace amounts of H_2O_2 would be generated during the direct photolysis of VL, as is the case during the direct photolysis of other phenolic compounds (Anastasio et al., 1997). This small amount of H_2O_2 can also form OH radicals, albeit to a much lower concentration than under condition (A). The measured decay rate of $2.3 \times 10^{-4} \text{ s}^{-1}$ is close to the loss rates of common water-soluble organic compounds due to aqueous-phase processes under ambient conditions (Ervens et al., 2013). This decay rate is at least comparable to the gas-phase loss rate ($1 \times 10^{-4} \text{ s}^{-1}$) for VL, assuming a gas-phase oxidation rate constant of $10 \times 10^{-11} \text{ cm}^3 \text{ molecules}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ (Coeur-Tourneur et al., 2010) and a gas-phase OH concentration of $1 \times 10^6 \text{ molecules cm}^{-3}$ (Ervens et al., 2013). Therefore, even without H_2O_2 in the aqueous phase, the loss of methoxy-phenolic compounds like VL through the aqueous-phase process (with UV light) can be as important as that through gas-phase oxidation.

4 Atmospheric implications

The current work demonstrates that both (A) photochemical oxidation and (B) direct photolysis in aqueous phase can convert the intermediately volatile and slightly water-soluble, vanillin into less volatile products. Unlike the precursor vanillin, some of these products can remain after the drying process and be detected as particulate organics. The products from photochemical oxidation and direct photolysis are different. Significant changes in the hygroscopicity and CCN activity of the particles were observed in our experiments using AS and VL as initial components. The effects of organic products on aerosol hygroscopicity under the two conditions investigated are different, in line with their different structural features. Two interesting phenomena were observed. First, under condition (A), the degree of oxygenation first increased and then decreased. Second, a yellowish coloration of the reacting mixtures and high-molecular-weight products was observed mainly under condition (B). The first phenomenon suggests that aqueous-phase oxidation as under condition (A) may also have a competition between functionalization and fragmentation (Lee et al., 2012). The second phenomenon suggests that OH oxidation under condition (A) may lead to extensive carbon backbone breakage, while direct photolysis under condition (B) may induce radical-radical polymerization (Sun et al., 2010). Hydroxylated products and dimers (e.g., B302_a) are likely responsible for the yellowish color observed under condition (B). This observation suggests that direct photolysis of methoxy-phenolic compounds could contribute to the light-absorbing “brown carbon” observed in ambient aerosol samples (Chang and Thompson, 2010). During one of the trial experiments, the same yellowish color was also observed under condition (A) at the same H_2O_2 concentration (11.8 mM) but a 10 times higher VL concentration (1 mM) than in all other experiments. The formation of the yellowish color may thus be dependent on the concentration ratio between VL and OH radicals. If an excess amount of VL is available, hydroxylated products and dimers with a yellowish color can still be formed under condition (A).

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Well known as a source of POA, biomass burning also contributes to SOA formation by producing a large amount of slightly volatile and partially oxygenated species. Among many types of organics that are emitted from biomass burning, the methoxy-phenolic compounds of various levels of volatility deserve more attention regarding their contribution to SOA formation. It has been shown that they can be oxidized in gas phase to produce less volatile products, forming SOA (Grieshop et al., 2009; Cubison et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2012; Yee et al., 2013). Early studies using phenols as model compounds have also shown the potential role of this broad class of partially oxygenated compounds in SOA formation through aqueous-phase oxidation (Chang and Thompson, 2010; Sun et al., 2010). This study further demonstrates that the potential contribution of aqueous-phase oxidation, either photochemical oxidation or direct photolysis, to SOA formation is quite high. Once formed and mixed with other species such as inorganic salts in the particle phase, the SOA from biomass burning can strongly affect the physical properties, such as hygroscopicity and CCN activity, of atmospheric aerosol particles.

It should be noted that the current study only used a single model compound of methoxy-phenols with a relatively high concentration (0.1 mM) in aqueous phase to demonstrate the reactivity. Other methoxy-phenols may vary in (i) the number of methoxy groups (e.g., p-hydroxyl, guaiacyl, and syringyl have 0, 1, and 2 methoxy groups, respectively), (ii) the number of carbon left in the propyl chain (for instance, VL only has one carbon left), and (iii) the type and position of functional groups in the propyl chain (OH, C=O, or COOH in α , β , or γ position). These methoxy-phenols may vary significantly in both saturated vapor pressure and water solubility. Although their reactivity is expected to be similar to that of VL because they share similar aromatic and partially oxygenated characteristics, their actual contribution to SOA during aqueous-phase processing warrants further investigation. Moreover, the OH radical concentration used was also one order of magnitude higher than typical ambient concentrations. Nevertheless, the current work highlights the importance of SOA formation

and its subsequent effects on aerosol particles from the aqueous-phase processing of methoxy-phenolic compounds generated by biomass burning.

Supplementary material related to this article is available online at

<http://www.atmos-chem-phys-discuss.net/13/27641/2013/>

[acpd-13-27641-2013-supplement.pdf](#).

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**Table 1.** Summary of experimental conditions and measurements.

Expt #	Condition				Off-line ^e	AMS ^f	HTDMA ^g	CCNc ^h
A_1	AS ^a	VL ^b	H ₂ O ₂ ^c	UV on ^d	Y	Y		
A_2	AS	VL	H ₂ O ₂	UV on	Y	Y		
A_3	AS	VL	H ₂ O ₂	UV on	Y	Y		
B_1	AS	VL	–	UV on	Y	Y	Y	
B_2	AS	VL	–	UV on	Y	Y	Y	
B_3	AS	VL	–	UV on	Y	Y	Y	
A_4	AS	VL	H ₂ O ₂	UV on		Y	Y	
A_5	AS	VL	H ₂ O ₂	UV on		Y	Y	
A_6	AS	VL	H ₂ O ₂	UV on		Y	Y	
A_7	AS	VL	H ₂ O ₂	UV on		Y	Y	Y
A_8	AS	VL	H ₂ O ₂	UV on		Y	Y	Y
B_4	AS	VL	–	UV on		Y	Y	Y
B_5	AS	VL	–	UV on		Y	Y	Y
B_6	AS	VL	–	UV on		Y	Y	Y
A_9	–	VL	H ₂ O ₂	UV on	Y			
B_7	–	VL	–	UV on	Y			
C_1	AS	–	–	UV on		Y	Y	Y
C_2	AS	–	H ₂ O ₂	UV on		Y	Y	Y
C_3	AS	VL	–	–		Y		
C_4	AS	VL	H ₂ O ₂	–		Y		

^a ammonium sulfate (0.1 mM); ^b vanillin (0.1 mM); ^c hydrogen peroxide (11.8 mM); ^d UV lamp (254 nm); ^e samples collected for off-line analyses (A_1 to A_3 and B_1 to B_3 for UPLC-DAD analysis; A_9 and B_7 for UPLC-ToF-MS analysis); ^f high-resolution time-of-flight aerosol mass spectrometric measurements; ^g hygroscopic tandem differential mobility analyzer measurements; ^h cloud condensation nuclei measurements. “–” indicates certain species (AS, VL, or H₂O₂) or element (UV) were not included in the experiments. “Y” indicates sample collection and on-line analyses using the specific instrument.

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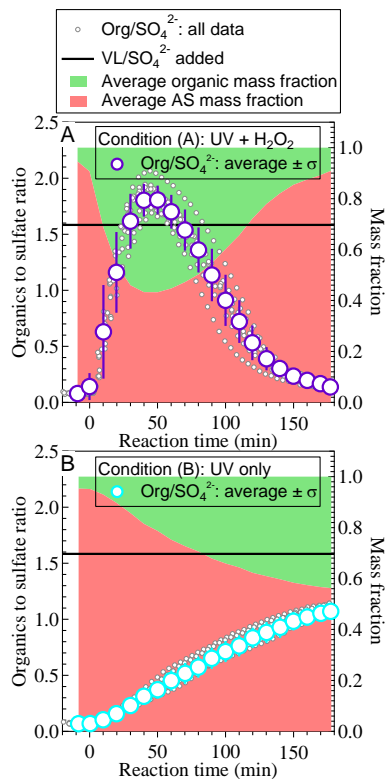


Fig. 1. Ratios of organics to sulfate, as well as mass fractions of organic and ammonium sulfate during experiments under conditions (A) and (B). Small grey symbols show data from all experiments (A_1 to A_8 or B_1 to B_8), while large color symbols show 10 min running averages with error bars representing standard deviations.

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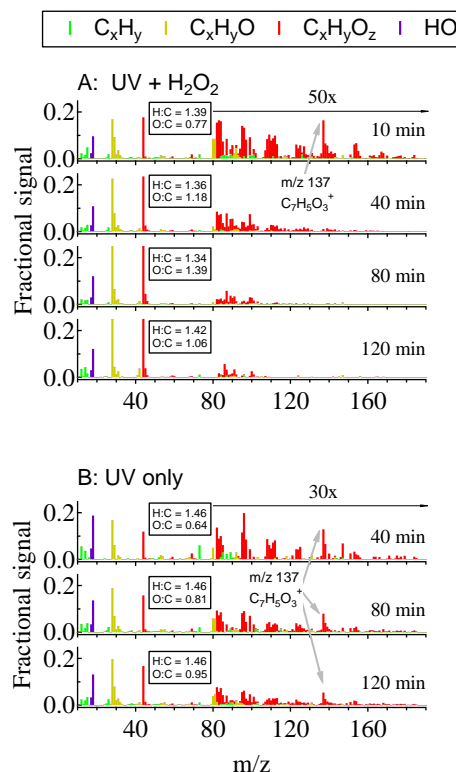


Fig. 2. Mass spectra at different reaction times under conditions (A) and (B), from experiments A_2 and B_2, respectively. The H : C and O : C ratios are also shown for each mass spectrum. Sticks with different colors indicate different ion “families”: C_xH_y being ions with only C and H, C_xH_yO being ions with C, H and only one O atom, $C_xH_yO_z$ being ions with C, H and more than one O atoms, and HO being ions with only H and O.

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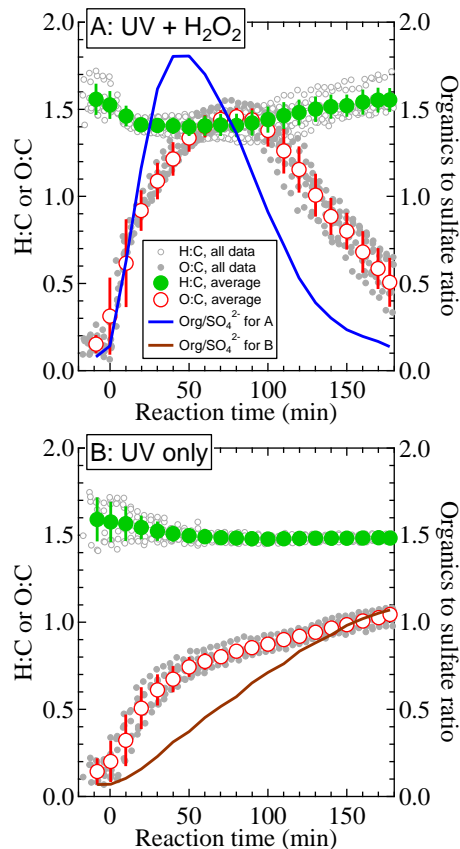


Fig. 3. H : C and O : C ratios as a function of time under conditions (A) and (B). Also shown are the 10 min running average ratios of organics to sulfate (solid lines) under these two conditions.

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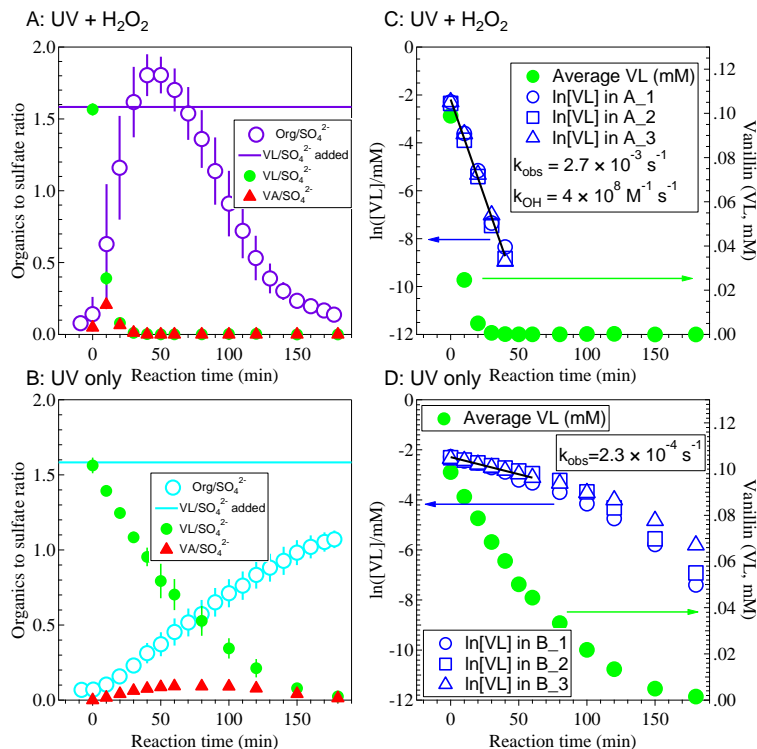


Fig. 4. The ratio of vanillin (VL) to sulfate and the ratio of vanillic acid (VA) to sulfate (**A, B**), their absolute concentrations in the aqueous solution and the natural log of their absolute concentrations (**C, D**) under the two reaction conditions. Decay rate constants (k_{obs}) were determined at the first 50–60 min of the reactions. See main text for the discussion on the rate constant for the bimolecular reaction between VL and OH (k_{OH}) for condition (A) in (**C**).

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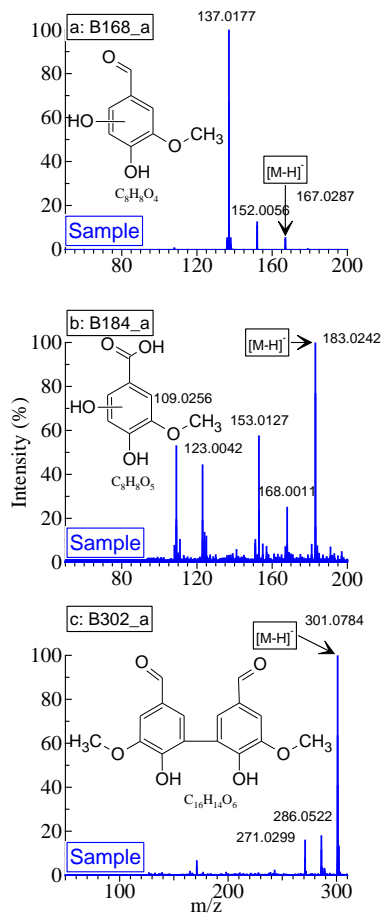


Fig. 5. Mass spectra of some of the products identified by UPLC-ESI-ToF-MS under condition (B). Mass spectra of other products identified by UPLC-ESI-ToF-MS can be found in Fig. S12 in the Supplement.

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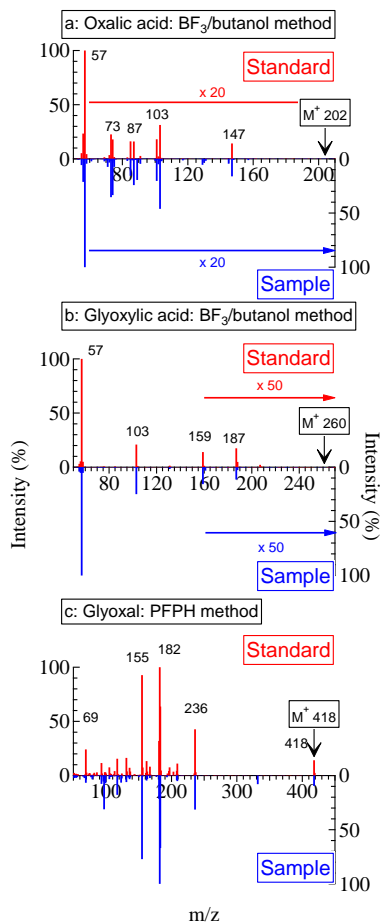


Fig. 6. Mass spectra of derivatized standard compounds (shown in red) and mass spectra of derivatized samples (shown in blue) that contained small oxygenates obtained by GC-MS. Mass spectra of other low-molecular-weight products can be found in Fig. S13 in the Supplement.

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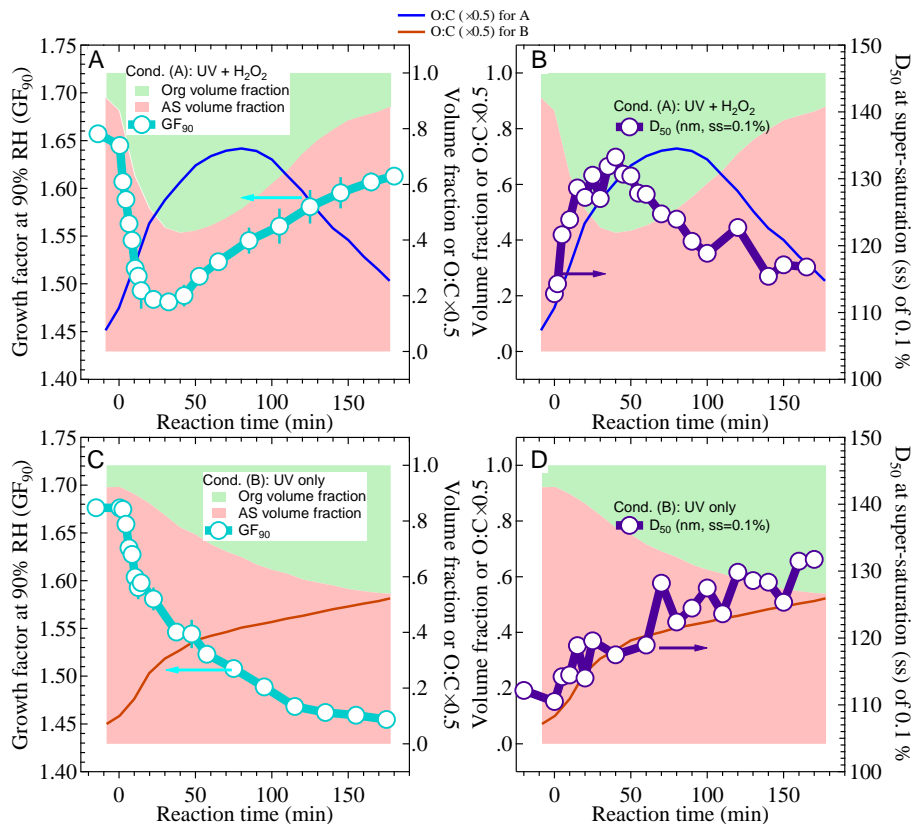


Fig. 7. HTDMA measured growth factor at 90 % RH (GF_{90}) (**A**, **C**) and CCNc-measured D_{50} at super-saturation (ss) of 0.1 % (**B**, **D**) under condition (A) (**A**, **B**) and condition (B) (**C**, **D**). Also shown are volume fractions of organics and ammonium sulfate, as well as O : C ratios.

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