Evidence of tetraphenylporphyrin monoacids by ion-transfer voltammetry at polarized liquid|liquid interfaces†

Bin Su,^a Fei Li,^a Raheleh Partovi-Nia,^a Claude Gros,^b Jean-Michel Barbe,^b Zdenek Samec^c and Hubert H. Girault^{*a}

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We present a simple methodology to illustrate the existence of tetraphenylporphyrin monoacid based on ion-transfer voltammetry at a polarized water|1,2-dichloroethane interface and organic p*K* values are also estimated.

The acid–base property of free-base porphyrins has been widely investigated, but the subject is still the matter of some controversy.¹ The tetrapyrrole ring of a free-base porphyrin contains two tertiary nitrogen atoms, which allows the gain of protons to form a monoacid and a diacid, as illustrated for the free-base 5,10,15,20-*meso*-tetraphenylporphyrin (H₂TPP) in Scheme 1, and the existence of monoacids has received considerable attention. By titrating H₂TPP usually one isosbestic point due to H₂TPP and H₄TPP²⁺ is observed, whereas the intermediate H₃TPP⁺ could not be clearly detected.²

The existence of H₃TPP⁺, as well as p*K*_{a1} and p*K*_{a2} values, has been reported in a few cases,^{3–6} one of which is based on the ion-transfer voltammetry at a polarized water|nitrobenzene interface.⁶ Since the pioneering work of Koryta *et al.*,⁷ ion transfer voltammetry at the liquid|liquid interface (also called the Interface between Two Immiscible Electrolyte Solutions (ITIES)) has become a well-established method to study the acid–base properties of molecules dissolved in an organic phase in contact with an aqueous electrolyte. As shown by Reymond *et al.* for the study of therapeutic molecules, this methodology allows the determination of p*K* values, and the drawing of ionic partition diagrams.⁸ Herein, using this simple methodology, we illustrate the existence of H₃TPP⁺ in 1,2-dichloroethane (DCE) and p*K*_{a1} and p*K*_{a2} values are also estimated.

An ITIES is formed when an aqueous solution containing hydrophilic ions is put in contact with an organic solution containing lipophilic ions. Electrochemical polarization supplied by an external voltage can give a polarizable potential window, the width of which is defined by the transfer reactions

of the electrolyte ions across the interface. The potential dependence for ion transfer across the interface follows a Nernst equation. For example, using 10 mM LiCl and 100 mM HCl as the aqueous electrolytes and bis(triphenylphosphoranylidene)ammonium tetrakis(pentafluorophenyl)borate (BTPPATPFB, 5 mM) as the lipophilic electrolyte in DCE, a potential window ranging from –0.5 to 0.4 V can be obtained, as shown by the dotted line in Fig. 1(a). This window is determined by the transfer of H⁺ and Cl[–] from water to DCE at positive and negative potentials, respectively. With the help of an ionophore present in DCE that can complex with H⁺, the transfer of H⁺ will be facilitated and a wave will appear in the middle of the potential window. Stated in another way, H⁺ will transfer at less positive potentials in this case, due to the presence of a proton acceptor in the organic phase. This phenomenon is usually called facilitated ion transfer reaction (or Transfer by Interfacial Complexation, TIC)⁹ and the shift of the transfer potential provides information on the complexation constant between the ionophore and H⁺.

By dissolving 50 μM H₂TPP in a DCE solution containing a lipophilic salts (BTPPATPFB, 5 mM) in contact with an acidic aqueous solution (10 mM LiCl and 100 mM HCl), two waves can be observed in the cyclic voltammogram, as illustrated by the full line in Fig. 1(a). The two waves, featuring the same current magnitude, lie at 0.046 V (Δ_o^wφ₁) and 0.262 V (Δ_o^wφ₂), respectively. First of all, the peak-to-peak potential separations for the two waves are approximately 60 mV, which complies with the conditions for a reversible transfer of a singly charged ion. The maximum peak currents are in good agreement with the Randles–Sevcik equation as shown by the linear dependence on the square root of scan rate, indicating that both waves originate from diffusion-controlled reactions. The measured peak currents also linearly increase with the H₂TPP concentration in the range 50 to 200 μM. This confirms that the ion transfer reactions are limited by the diffusion of H₂TPP species in the organic phase. Indeed, the proton concentration in water is in excess compared with that

Scheme 1 Protonation of H₂TPP to form monoacid and diacid.

^a Laboratoire d'Electrochimie Physique et Analytique, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Station 6, CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland. E-mail: hubert.girault@epfl.ch; Fax: +41 21 6933667; Tel: +41 21 6933145

^b Institut de Chimie Moléculaire de l'Université de Bourgogne, ICMUB-UMR 5260, 21078 Dijon Cedex, France

^c J. Heyrovsky Institute of Physical Chemistry of ASCR, v.v.i., Dolejškova 3, 182 23 Prague 8, Czech Republic

† Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: Fig. S1: Cyclic voltammetry of 50 μM H₂TPP at various scan rates. Fig. S2: Cyclic voltammetry at various concentrations of H₂TPP. Fig. S3: CVs at various aqueous pH. See DOI: 10.1039/b811886h

Fig. 1 (a) Cyclic voltammograms in the absence (···) and presence (—) of 50 μM H_2TPP in DCE at a scan rate of 0.025 V s^{-1} . Electrolytes: 10 mM LiCl and 100 mM HCl in water and 5 mM BTPPATPFB in DCE. (b) pH dependence of the half-wave potentials of the two waves.

Scheme 2 Illustration of interfacial formation of H_3TPP^+ and $\text{H}_4\text{TPP}^{2+}$.

of H_2TPP in DCE. Furthermore, the two waves shift with the acidity of aqueous phase by approximately 60 mV pH^{-1} , as illustrated in Fig. 1(b), confirming that both waves correspond to a facilitated proton transfer reaction. As illustrated in Scheme 2, the first wave represents the transfer of a proton from water to DCE facilitated by H_2TPP that in fact is the first protonation of H_2TPP to form the monoacid H_3TPP^+ in DCE, and the second one represents the facilitated transfer of a second proton by H_3TPP^+ . These two processes can be expressed as:

As illustrated in Fig. 1(a), the facilitated transfer of H^+ in the presence of H_2TPP and H_3TPP^+ is occurring at lower potentials than that of H^+ alone.

In addition, considering the two processes represent a 1 : 1 complexation reaction controlled by the diffusion of the porphyrin species in the organic phase, K_{a1} and K_{a2} can be estimated by exploring the pH dependence of the apparent

transfer potential according to the following equation:¹⁰

$$\Delta_o^w \phi_{\text{LH}^+}^{1/2} = \Delta_o^w \phi_{\text{H}^+}^{\circ'} + \frac{RT}{2F} \ln \left(\frac{D_L}{D_{\text{LH}^+}} \right) - \frac{2.303RT}{F} \text{p}K_a^{\text{DCE}} + \frac{2.303RT}{F} \text{pH}^w \quad (3)$$

where $\Delta_o^w \phi_{\text{LH}^+}^{1/2}$ is the half-wave transfer potential of the respective facilitated proton transfers. $\Delta_o^w \phi_{\text{H}^+}^{\circ'}$ is the formal transfer potential for the transfer of H^+ . D_L and D_{LH^+} ($L = \text{H}_2\text{TPP}, \text{H}_3\text{TPP}^+$) represent the diffusion coefficients of the proton acceptor ligand and its protonated form, and for simplicity it can be assumed that $D_L \approx D_{\text{LH}^+}$; pH^w is the aqueous pH. The relationship between $\Delta_o^w \phi$ and the pH^w is found to be linear, and the intercept allows the determination of the $\text{p}K_a$ in the organic phase. K_a^{DCE} is defined by:

$$K_a^{\text{DCE}} = \frac{a_L^{\text{DCE}} a_{\text{H}^+}^{\text{DCE}}}{a_{\text{LH}^+}^{\text{DCE}}} \quad (4)$$

Doing so, as shown in Fig. 1(b), $\text{p}K_{a1}^{\text{DCE}}$ and $\text{p}K_{a2}^{\text{DCE}}$ here are found to be equal to 9.8 and 6.0, which show that both H_3TPP^+ and $\text{H}_4\text{TPP}^{2+}$ are very weak acids in DCE. Meanwhile, it suggests that both H_2TPP and H_3TPP^+ are weak bases, having a small affinity for protons. It is worthwhile to mention that the proton activity in DCE is very small and the lack of hydrogen bonds in DCE prevents the stabilization of the protonated species and favours the presence of neutral or low charges species.

In conclusion, we present a simple methodology to illustrate the existence of H_3TPP^+ in DCE, based on ion-transfer voltammetry at the water|1,2-dichloroethane interface. K_{a1} and K_{a2} values can be accurately determined.

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