Surface Enhanced Raman Scattering from OH⁻ Adsorbed on a Ag Electrode in Dilute Mg²⁺ Electrolytes

by

Paul B. Dorain
Amherst College
Amherst, Massachusetts 01002

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Surface enhanced Raman scattering (SERS) has been used to probe the adsorption of OH⁻ on an Ag electrode immersed in 10⁻² to 10⁻⁹ M MgCl₂ containing micromolar quantities of either KMnO₄ or dissolved Cl⁻. Strong spectra due to adsorbed OH⁻, nearly identical to those observed previously in 1 M MgCl₂ solutions, were obtained only if the oxidizing agent was present. Besides the O-H stretching modes near 3600 cm⁻¹, the low frequency modes due to adsorbed Cl⁻ are observed. A model is proposed in which adsorbed Mg²⁺ provides positive surface charge densities which are sites for adsorbing OH⁻. Three distinct adsorption sites are predicted which is in accord with the observation of three O-H species during H₂ production. These results, together with those previously obtained for alkali halides, indicate that corrosion processes in dilute aqueous media proceed by pathways dependent on the concentration and composition of dissolved salts which strongly affect the surface structure of water and its derivatives.
SURFACE ENHANCED RAMAN SCATTERING from OH⁻

ADSORBED on a Ag ELECTRODE in DILUTE Mg²⁺ ELECTROLYTES

Paul B. Dorain
Chemistry Department,
Amherst College,
Amherst, MA 01002
ABSTRACT

Surface enhanced Raman scattering (SERS) has been used to probe the adsorption of OH$^-$ on a Ag electrode immersed in 10$^{-2}$ to 10$^{-3}$ M MgCl$_2$ containing micromolar quantities of either KMnO$_4$ or dissolved Cl$_2$. Strong spectra due to adsorbed OH$^-$, nearly identical to those obtained previously in $\geq$1 M MgCl$_2$ solutions, were obtained only if the oxidizing agent was present. Besides the O–H stretching modes near 3600 cm$^{-1}$, the low frequency modes due to the metal oxygen stretch are observed. A model is proposed in which adsorbed Mg$^{+2}$ provides positive surface charge densities which are sites for adsorbing OH$^-$. Three distinct adsorption sites are predicted which is in accord with the observation of three O–H species during H$_2$ production. These results, together with those previously obtained for alkali halides, indicate that corrosion processes in dilute aqueous media proceed by pathways dependent on the concentration and composition of dissolved salts which strongly affect the surface structure of water and its derivatives.
INTRODUCTION

The structure of water at or near the surface of a metal on which there may be other adsorbed molecular species is important in understanding the chemistry of corrosion, electrolysis, wetting, and many catalytic oxidation processes\(^1\)-\(^4\). Until the advent of surface enhanced Raman scattering (SERS) it was difficult to probe \textit{in situ} the vibrational properties of interfacial water and its chemical derivatives with spectroscopic techniques because of the low surface concentration. SERS, being sensitive to less than monolayer coverage of adsorbates\(^5\), is a powerful tool with which to study these systems.

During the early years after the discovery of SERS it was puzzling that no observation of SERS due to adsorbed H\(_2\)O was reported even though aqueous electrochemical systems were actively investigated. Eventually, it was discovered that in very concentrated solutions (\(\geq 1\text{M}\)) of Cs, Rb, or K halides, SERS of adsorbed H\(_2\)O and D\(_2\)O was readily observed presumably because the hydrogen bonded structure of water was disrupted. Subsequently, extensive studies of the effects of electrolytes, types of electrodes, temperature and pH range on the SERS of H\(_2\)O have been reported\(^6\)-\(^12\).

Recently\(^13\), we reported that the spectra due to interfacial H\(_2\)O were observed with SERS from Ag electrodes in very dilute solutions of alkali halides (\(~10^{-3}\text{M}\)), including NaCl and LiCl, which also contain 10\(^{-5}\text{M}\) KMnO\(_4\). The role of the Mn species is not clear, but the spectrum of the adsorbed H\(_2\)O is identical to that obtained in concentrated alkali halide solutions. This implies that H\(_2\)O is bound to the Ag surface with the manganese playing the role of an organizer of the layers of H\(_2\)O in the interfacial region. This effect has been seen in other systems using the technique of ESDIAD where, for instance, the ability of less than a monolayer of adsorbed Br to order a subsequent addition of H\(_2\)O on
a Ag(110) surface has been observed\textsuperscript{14,15}. For solutions with high interfacial pH, SERS is observed for adsorbates identified as OH\textsuperscript{-} or OD\textsuperscript{-} in addition to H\textsubscript{2}O/D\textsubscript{2}O in concentrated KCl electrolytes\textsuperscript{16}. If alkaline earth halides or Li\textsuperscript{+} and Na\textsuperscript{+} halides are used instead of KCl, two peaks identified as OH\textsuperscript{-} are observed in the stretching region. It was postulated that the OH\textsuperscript{-} ion orients in two ways with respect to the surface normal: the oxygen is bonded to the Ag surface (3680 cm\textsuperscript{-1}) or the oxygen is attracted to the alkaline earth ions in the Helmholz layer with the hydrogen end pointing towards the Ag surface (3595 cm\textsuperscript{-1}). The major evidence for the assignment of the peaks to OH\textsuperscript{-} is:

1) the spectral peaks are observed if the bulk solution pH is high (\sim 11).
2) the peaks disappear upon the addition of HCl (pH = \sim 2).
3) prolonged electrolysis at -1.7 \textit{V}_{SCE} (saturated calomel electrode reference) producing H\textsubscript{2} increases the interfacial OH\textsuperscript{-} concentration which is then detected with SERS.
4) isotopic substitution of OD\textsuperscript{-} for OH\textsuperscript{-} is in accord with expectation, and
5) the SERS peaks are observed at energy shifts similar to but somewhat higher than those found for OH\textsuperscript{-} (OD\textsuperscript{-}) in alkali halide single crystals.

An important consequence of these studies is that the supporting electrolyte does not play a benign role in the determination of the adsorbed water-like species. In particular, the cationic species determines whether the surface is predominately covered by water or hydroxide. The more important implication is that corrosion processes in dilute aqueous media proceed by numerous pathways depending on the concentration and composition of dissolved salts which affect the interfacial water structure.

In this paper we report the observation of the SERS spectra due to OH\textsuperscript{-} species on a Ag electrode in dilute aqueous MgCl\textsubscript{2} electrolytes (10\textsuperscript{-2} - 10\textsuperscript{-3}M) in the presence of 50
μM KMnO₄ or Cl₂. The hydroxide species, identical to those observed with concentrated alkaline earth halide solutions without the oxidizer, demonstrate that the adsorbates are attached directly to the Ag surface. Furthermore, the chemical equivalence of KMnO₄ and Cl₂ in inducing hydroxyl adsorbates points to a mechanism in which the surface charge of Ag is modified such as to induce the formation of organized water type adsorbates in the presence of Mg⁺².

**EXPERIMENTAL**

The SERS spectra were measured using an Ar⁺ laser operating at λ=514.5nm at an incident power of 100mW focused on ~1mm² surface area of the Ag electrode. The image of this illuminated spot was focused on the entrance slit of the triple stage spectrograph and the dispersed light was measured with an optical multichannel linear diode array detector. The data collection and messaging were performed with a minicomputer.

The polycrystalline Ag working electrode, along with a saturated calomel cell (SCE) and a platinum counter electrode was immersed in the electrolytic solution in a fused quartz optical cell. The counter electrode was placed behind the Ag electrode which was covered with epoxy except for the laser exposed surface. Standard methods of voltammetry were used to oxidize and reduce Ag to reform the electrode surface. Typically, the working electrode voltage relative to the saturated calomel cell (V SCE) was ramped at 5mV/s.

Distilled water and reagent grade chemicals were used, and the pH of the electrolyte, monitored continuously, did not change significantly during a run. The solutions were purged of oxygen by bubbling N₂ gas into the electrolyte for several minutes prior to a ORC.

**RESULTS**

KMnO₄/MgCl₂. The SERS spectrum obtained from a Ag electrode after a second ORC in a 0.01M MgCl₂ solution containing 50μM KMnO₄ at a pH=9.62 is shown in Fig. 1a,b. Figure 1a depicts the frequency shift region near the O–H stretching region at
and Fig. 1b shows the low frequency region for a similar ORC. The sequence of $V_{SCE}$ for the second ORC is as follows: After the initial ORC, $V_{SCE}$ is swept to +0.1V and then switched to sweep cathodically (negatively with respect to SCE). When $V_{SCE}$ is linearly ramped to -1.59$V_{SCE}$, appreciable H$_2$ forms at the cathode as evident from the increase in the reduction current shown at the right in Fig. 1. The initial peak at 3677 cm$^{-1}$ (peak A) vanishes during the ORC during which Faradaic current flows. Immediately after the reduction is complete at 0.04 $V_{SCE}$, the peak reappears with an unresolved shoulder at 3660 cm$^{-1}$. As $V_{SCE}$ is swept cathodically a small but perceptable shift of peak A towards lower Raman frequency shift is observed. At -0.33$V_{SCE}$, three peaks form which, at -1.69$V_{SCE}$, occur at 3684 cm$^{-1}$ (peak C), 3648 cm$^{-1}$ (peak D) and 3584 cm$^{-1}$ (peak E). This spectrum is nearly identical to that previously reported for the formation of OH$^-$ adsorbates on Ag electrodes. However, only peaks C and E were observed, a fact which formed the basis for the model in which the OH$^-$ was oriented either with the oxygen at the Ag surface or pointed with the oxygen toward the double layer. The observation of three peaks argues against this model.

In the low frequency shift region, two peaks (F and G respectively in Fig. 1b) are evident at 533 and 458 cm$^{-1}$ prior to the Faradaic portion of the ORC. These peaks occur at energy shifts reminiscent of those found for the Ag-O stretching mode of adsorbed OH$^-$ and H$_2$O (500 and 415 cm$^{-1}$) and for the metal oxide vibrations of cathodically deposited Ni(OH)$_2$ on a roughened Au surface. After the Faradaic current ceases, peak G is still evident along with a new peak at 795 cm$^{-1}$, peak H. During the cathodic sweep, peak F again grows in intensity originating roughly with the onset of H$_2$ production at -1.14$V_{SCE}$. However, it is accompanied by several broad, unresolved, high-frequency components. On the other hand, peak G has nearly a constant intensity with a small maximum at -0.67$V_{SCE}$ coinciding with an increase in peak I at 1610 cm$^{-1}$ which is due to the bending mode of adsorbed H$_2$O.

Peak H, formed immediately after the Faradaic reduction, decreases to zero intensity.
at the onset of H₂ evolution implying that it is not an adsorbed OH⁻ species. Switching to an anodic sweep at -1.59V_{SCE}, the processes are found to be reversible with the exception that peak H does not reappear.

Cl₂/MgCl₂. Figure 2a,b show the SERS spectra obtained under conditions similar to those just described except that the electrolytic solution (pH=10.2, 0.01M MgCl₂) contains 50 µM Cl₂ rather than KMnO₄. Comparison of Figs. 1 and 2 show that nearly the same results are obtained regardless of the oxidizer. Yet without the oxidizer, no SERS spectra are obtained with this concentration of MgCl₂ or less. In other experiments in which alkali halides were used with Cl₂, no SERS spectra were obtained under similar conditions. This indicates that a common surface structure of adsorbed OH⁻ is formed at the Ag electrode interface regardless of oxidizer and it is like that obtained in concentrated MgCl₂ without oxidizer.

Similar spectra are obtained using electrolytes with a pH as low as 3.5, implying that the adsorbates are not simple hydroxides. Unlike the case of alkali halides with KMnO₄ as the oxidizer, the addition of O₂ at 1 atm does not change the spectra regardless of V_{SCE}. It should also be noted that 0.01M MgBr₂ solutions with or without Br₂ at λₓ = 488.0nm produced strong identical spectra.

Estimates of the relative surface concentrations of metal impurities were made secondary ion mass spectrometry. Similar electrodes and ORC conditions were used to remove and redeposit ~ 20 atomic layers of Ag in solutions of MgCl₂ with KMnO₄. The surface concentration of Mg was found to be five times that of Mn at a depth of 10nm where the Mn/Ag mole ratio was 1/400. It is assumed therefore that a fresh Ag electrode surface after an ORC is contaminated with ~1% Mn or Mg or less. Yet it is obvious that they have a major influence on the nature of the adsorbates as observed with SERS.

DISCUSSION

Recently, there have been several detailed reports on the ability of impurity atoms on
metal surfaces in a high vacuum environment to induce an ordered surface structure of adsorbate molecules such as H2O on Ag(110). As noted before an example is the ESDIAD study of a Ag(110) surface which is exposed to less than a monolayer of Br2 before exposure to H2O vapor. In the absence of adsorbed Br, adsorbed H2O forms a disordered ice structure, but the pretreatment with Br causes an ordered hydrogen bonded polymer to form.\textsuperscript{15}

In other experiments preadsorption of less than a monolayer of O2 rather than Br on Ag(110) followed by exposure to H2O forms an ordered array of OH.\textsuperscript{18} Additional exposure to H2O causes the formation of a hydrogen bonded array of H2O and OH\textsuperscript{-} which is reminescent of the hydrogen bonded structure of LiOH H2O.\textsuperscript{19}

Recent molecular dynamics calculations have demonstrated the ability of a Cl\textsuperscript{-} ion, for example, to order clusters of H2O in conformations not usually expected. For instance Cl\textsuperscript{-}(H2O)\textsubscript{4} has a hydrogen bonded structure in which the Cl\textsuperscript{-} is at the apex of a square pyramid whose base is formed by the four oxygens of the H2O molecules.\textsuperscript{20}

While none of these systems is directly applicable to the solution interface of a Ag electrode in a MgCl\textsubscript{2} electrolyte, they do point to the need to consider rather uncommon surface adsorbate structures. In the early work on the the SERS of H2O, concentrated alkali halides were used because it was felt that the hydrogen bonded H2O structure was disrupted by the high concentration of hydrated ions. With the discovery that adsorbed H2O is easily observed in very dilute alkali halide electrolytes, it may be surmised that a small surface mole fraction of adsorbed M\textsuperscript{+} or M\textsuperscript{+2}, where M is a group IA or IIA metal, increases the interfacial structural order of adsorbed H2O species by changing the surface charge distribution. From the data of our SERS spectra alone, it is not possible to arrive at an unabiguos surface structure. However, it is possible to make some plausible arguments that the surface has both adsorbed H2O and OH\textsuperscript{-}.

The common growth of peaks E and F as the H2 discharge current increases is an argument for the formation of OH\textsuperscript{-}. Previously, peak E was assigned to OH\textsuperscript{-} in which
the oxygen is attracted to Mg$^{+2}$ cations in the outer Helmholz plane.\textsuperscript{16} A less energically favorable orientation, as evidenced by the difference in hydration energies, is that where the oxygen end is bonded to the Ag surface. That we observe three peaks in the O-H stretching mode region and that we can observe the same spectra when the solution bulk pH is as low as 3.5 argues agains this interpretation.

An alternative model results if it is assumed that the surface structure of H$_2$O or OH$^-$ is similar to that observed at an UHV interface which has been sequentially exposed to O$_2$ and H$_2$O.\textsuperscript{18} In our case since the Ag surface is reconstructed during an ORC in an aqueous medium, it is largely covered by disordered hydrogen-bonded H$_2$O molecules. Furthermore, Mg$^{+2}$ ions are adsorbed onto this surface replacing Ag atoms to form a dilute distribution of impurity sites with high positive charge. It is expected that OH$^-$ ions are strongly bonded to these Mg$^{+2}$ sites as a comparison of the bulk solution stability constants of MgOH$^+$ and AgOH suggests.\textsuperscript{21} In addition Ag atom size restrictions limit the number of site geometries available for OH$^-$ to two which we will label I and II. The role of the oxidizing agent, as previously discussed\textsuperscript{13} is to provide a constant reformation of the surface due to the diffusion controlled oxidation. This process is evidenced by the small reduction current observed regardless of $V_{SCE}$.

Site I occurs at the outermost surface layers of the (100), (110), or the (111) planes when a Mg$^{+2}$ replaces a Ag. OH$^-$ ions are readily adsorbed to provide SERS active centers sensitive to voltage tuning of the vibrational frequency since they protrude into the Helmholz field. In the case of the (100) or (111) planes, Mg$^{+2}$ ions, incorporated into the second layer of the lattice, are shielded electrostatically by neighboring Ag atoms to reduce the electric field experienced by an OH$^-$ ion. More importantly, geometry restrictions prevent OH$^-$ ions from occupying surface interstitial sites ($r_{OH} = 1.4\text{Å}, r_{100} = 0.6\text{Å}$ for the octahedral interstitial site of Ag metal) which are the only possible sites for interaction with second layer Mg$^{+2}$. Consequently, only Type I sites exist on the (100) or (111) surfaces.
The situation for the (110) surface is different. Figure 3 shows that there are two sites for the adsorption of OH\textsuperscript{−}: one on the ridge which is a Type I site again, and the other, Type II, is in the trough which is parallel to the (110) direction. Presumably OH\textsuperscript{−} adsorbates in the trough are not normal to the surface; conforming to the results obtained under UHV conditions\textsuperscript{18} These sites are further influenced if OH\textsuperscript{−} or H\textsubscript{2}O moieties are adsorbed on the adjacent ridge lattice points as shown and labeled IIa and IIb respectively in Fig. 3. Hydrogen bonding of these species with the OH\textsuperscript{−} in the trough will vary causing different frequency shifts. The IR spectra of LiOH and LiOH\textsubscript{H\textsubscript{2}O} serve as models to predict the relative frequency shifts for sites IIa and IIb\textsuperscript{19} In LiOH, hydrogen bonding is considerably less than that which occurs between OH\textsuperscript{−} and H\textsubscript{2}O in LiOH\textsubscript{H\textsubscript{2}O}. The Raman frequency shift is therefore greater in LiOH. If an OH\textsuperscript{−} is on a ridge, then hydrogen bonding is minimized as in LiOH. The SERS spectra for the OH\textsuperscript{−} stretching mode is expected to be at larger shift than for the case where H\textsubscript{2}O molecules on the ridge are hydrogen bonded to an OH\textsuperscript{−} in the trough (Type 2b). This case is much more like that for LiOH\textsubscript{H\textsubscript{2}O}.

Based on this analogy when H\textsubscript{2} is evolved on the Ag cathode, OH\textsuperscript{−} is adsorbed on Type I sites and the SERS peaks E and F of Fig. 1 can be assigned to MgO–H and Mg–OH stretching modes. Peak C is assigned to the O–H stretching mode of a Type IIa site and peak D is the corresponding mode at a Type IIb site. That there is H\textsubscript{2}O on the surface is evidenced by peak G which has been previously identified as the stretching mode of Ag–OH\textsubscript{2}\textsuperscript{13}.

If V\textsubscript{SCE} is swept anodically after H\textsubscript{2} production has occurred as in Fig. 1, the predominant species adsorbed on the surface will be OH\textsuperscript{−} at Type I sites as evident by peak A. After a second ORC both Type I and II OH\textsuperscript{−} adsorbates are formed due to the rapid Ag\textsuperscript{+} reduction processes as shown by the appearance of peak B as well as peak A and a broadened peak F. During the cathodic sweep of V\textsubscript{SCE}, some of the OH\textsuperscript{−} is protonated to form adsorbed H\textsubscript{2}O as indicated by the increase in intensity of peak G, and the decrease of peak A and B before the onset of H\textsubscript{2} production at \( \sim -0.8 \text{V}_{\text{SCE}} \). At V\textsubscript{SCE} more negative
than this, Type I sites are increasingly more predominant because of the rapid production of H₂ and adsorbed OH⁻.

If a fast cathodic sweep is used (25 mV/s), peak C is more intense relative to peak E shortly after -0.9 V_{SCF} than with a slow sweep (5 mV/s), but becomes less intense at more negative voltages. Peak E, however, grows in intensity even after switching to an anodic sweep. Thus, the dynamic processes of H₂ production favor Type I sites over those of Type IIa. This kinetic effect is expected if, during the cathodic sweep, the outer surface layers become increasingly covered with adsorbed Mg⁺² due to electrostatic attraction to the cathode. In contrast, the number of Type II sites will remain essentially unchanged in this process.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been shown that micromolar quantities of the oxidizing agents KMnO₄, Cl₂, and Br₂ in the presence of 10⁻³M Mg⁺² activate a Ag electrode surface forming an adsorbed layer of OH⁻ ions which is very similar to that previously observed in concentrated electrolytes only. Three distinct surface sites are formed during the continuous diffusion controlled oxidation: Type I, a Mg⁺² adsorbed in the outermost Ag surface layers; Type IIa, a Mg⁺² ion in the trough of the (110) surface with a OH⁻ on the ridge; Type IIb, a Mg⁺² ion in the trough with a H₂O molecule adsorbed on the ridge. In each site, the Mg⁺² site polarizes the Ag surface to tightly bind OH⁻. While this model is not unique, it is in conformity with the results recently obtained for adsorbed OH⁻ and H₂O at the vacuum metal interface and previous SERS results for dilute electrolytic solutions. The implication of these results is that small surface concentrations of metal ion impurities on Ag surfaces strongly influence whether O⁻², OH⁻, or H₂O is the principal adsorbate.
Acknowledgements

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References

(New York, 1977)
Figure Captions

Fig. 1. The SERS spectra obtained from a Ag electrode immersed in $10^{-2}$M MgCl$_2$, pH = 9.62 and 50μM KMnO$_4$ solution a) as a function of $V_{SCE}$. a) The O–H spectral region. b) The low frequency modes for the M–OH region and c) the voltammogram which is presented in an ‘unfolded’ style. Spectra a) and b) were obtained in two separate but nearly identical experiments.

Fig. 2. The SERS spectra obtained from $10^{-2}$M MgCl$_2$, pH=10.2, 50μM Cl$_2$ solution as a function of $V_{SCE}$. The conditions were similar to those of Fig. 1. Note that the current density scale in c) is reversed from that in Fig. 1.

Fig. 3. A schematic of a (110) Ag surface showing the Type I and Type IIa,b sites. It is assumed that a Mg$^{2+}$ impurity ion is incorporated at the site during an ORC or in subsequent surface reconstruction by the oxidizing agent. The random H$_2$O water structure on much of the Ag surface has been omitted for clarity of presentation.
0.1 M MgCl$_2$, 50 µM KMnO$_4$
H$_2$O, pH = 9.62, λ = 514.5 nm

RAMAN SHIFT, cm$^{-1}$
0.01M MgCl₂, 50 μM Cl₂
H₂O, pH = 10.2, λ = 514.5 nm
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>San Diego, California 91232</td>
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