



Hydrogen spillover monitored by resonant photoemission spectroscopy

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ABSTRACT

We have employed resonant photoemission spectroscopy to investigate the phenomenon of hydrogen spillover on well-defined model Pt/ceria catalysts. On Pt/CeO₂(111)/Cu(111), hydrogen spillover and reverse spillover give rise to reversible changes of the oxidation state of the surface cerium ions. These changes are monitored with highest sensitivity via resonant enhancement of Ce³⁺- and Ce⁴⁺-related features in the valence band photoemission spectra. The temperature regions are precisely determined in which specific processes such hydrogen spillover, Ce³⁺ transport, and reverse spillover are activated.

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1. Introduction

In modern catalysis research, the phenomenon of spillover has been a subject of intense investigations [1–12]. Conceptually, the term describes the transfer of an activated species via surface diffusion from an active particle to the support (spillover) or vice versa (reverse spillover). Spillover processes, in particular, involving hydrogen, have suggested to be implicated in the mechanisms of many catalytic processes, including, e.g., methanol synthesis, the water gas shift reaction, Fischer–Tropsch synthesis, or hydrogenation reactions [10]. Today, hydrogen spillover regains popularity for its importance in hydrogen storage and hydrogen fuel cells applications [13,14].

Although, the elementary mechanistic details of hydrogen spillover are not clear in most cases, it is apparent that spillover-mediated adsorption involves two fundamental processes, i.e., the dissociation of hydrogen on the metal surface and the transfer to the support. Naturally, the surface transfer of the adsorbed species is of particular interest here, although, in certain cases, diffusion through the gas phase may also be important [15,16]. Hydrogen spilt over onto the oxide support can be detected experimentally as soon as it produces OH groups or hydrogen bronzes

(for example, H_xWO₃, H_xMoO₃) [11,12,17,18]. However, numerous ambiguities still exist concerning the mechanism and kinetics of the individual transfer steps. In very early work, Boudart et al. showed that in mixtures of Pt and WO₃, hydrogen spillover required the presence of molecular oxygen or water [11,12]. The mechanism and the nature of the spilt-over hydrogen were discussed controversially [1,11–13,19,20]. Hattori and Shishido [8,9] suggested that hydrogen spillover on Pt/SO₄–ZrO₂ proceeds via diffusion of neutral atoms. Those neutral atoms transform into H⁺ upon donation of electrons to Lewis centers on the oxides surface. Upon reverse spillover, these electrons may be taken up again and subsequent desorption of H₂ can occur.

If spillover leads to net transfer of an atomic hydrogen species, the process is connected to a change of the oxidation state of the oxide. For reducible oxides, such as cerium dioxide, we expect a change of the oxidation state of the oxide cations [16,21,22]. As shown by Vicario et al. [21], adsorption of atomic hydrogen on CeO₂(111) is accompanied by the transfer of an electron from hydrogen to a surface cerium ion, leading to reduction of Ce⁴⁺ to Ce³⁺. Spilt-over hydrogen ion situates on top of a surface oxygen ion, forming an axial tricoordinated OH group on the CeO₂(111) surface.

In the current article, we report on the direct experimental observation of hydrogen spillover using resonant photoemission spectroscopy (RPES). The method is applied to a Pt/CeO₂(111)/

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Cu(111) model catalysts, and the experiment is performed under ultraclean ultrahigh-vacuum (UHV) conditions. The method allows us to monitor changes of the oxidation state of cerium with ultimate sensitivity and to determine the net charge of the spilt-over species. Thus, detailed information on the mechanism, the temperature dependence, and the reversibility of the process is obtained.

2. Experimental methods

High-resolution X-ray synchrotron radiation photoelectron spectroscopy (SRPES) studies were performed at the Materials Science Beamline at the Elettra synchrotron facility in Trieste, Italy. The ultrahigh-vacuum (UHV) end-station (base pressure 1×10^{-10} mbar) was equipped with a multichannel electron energy analyzer (Specs Phoibos 150), a rear view Low Energy Electron Diffraction (LEED) optics, an argon sputter gun, and a gas inlet system. The basic setup of the chamber includes a dual Mg/Al X-ray source used for the calibration of the energy of the synchrotron light and off-line work. Additionally, two electron-beam evaporators for metal deposition were installed on the chamber. A single crystal Cu(111) disc (MaTeck) was used as a substrate for the Pt/CeO₂ samples.

The thermal desorption spectroscopy (TDS) experiments were performed in a separate UHV system (base pressure 1×10^{-10} mbar) equipped with quadrupole mass spectrometer (QMS, Pfeiffer Prisma-Plus). The QMS was placed behind a differentially pumped nozzle in order to separate background contributions from molecules desorbing directly from the sample surface. The sample was heated resistively and was attached to a liquid-nitrogen cooled cryostat, making it possible to reach sample temperatures between 90 and 1200 K.

A copper single crystal, Cu(111), supplied by MaTeck GmbH (8 mm dia. disc, 2 mm thick), oriented with a miscut below 0.1° was used as the substrate. The Cu(111) was cleaned by several cycles of Ar⁺ sputtering (at 300 K for 60 min) and annealing (723 K for 5 min) until no traces of carbon or any other contaminant were found in the photoelectron spectra. Epitaxial layers of CeO₂ were grown on clean Cu(111) by physical vapor deposition of Ce metal (Goodfellow, 99.99%) in an oxygen atmosphere ($p_{\text{O}_2} = 5 \times 10^{-7}$ mbar, Linde, 99.995%) at 523 K, followed by annealing of the films at 523 K in an oxygen atmosphere at the same pressure for 10 min. The preparation method yields a continuous CeO₂(111) film with a thickness of approximately 1.5 nm as determined from the attenuation of the Cu 2p_{3/2} intensity [23]. LEED observations on the prepared films confirm the epitaxial growth of CeO₂(111) with the characteristic (1.5 × 1.5) superstructure in relation to the Cu(111) substrate. According to our previous STM studies, flat CeO₂(111) terraces included extended rough patches containing small ceria particles [29]. Pt was deposited by means of physical vapor deposition from a Pt wire (0.5 mm in diameter, Goodfellow, 99.99%) onto the CeO₂/Cu(111) at 300 K. The nominal thickness of the deposited Pt layer was 0.4 nm as determined from the attenuation of the Cu 2p_{3/2} intensity. The structure and thermal stability of the Pt/CeO_{2-x} systems have been discussed before [29]. Briefly, Pt nanoparticles grown at 300 K preferentially nucleate at rough patches of the ceria surface. Typically, the density of Pt particles is $5.4 \pm 1.0 \times 10^{23} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ and the average size of Pt particles is $3.3 \pm 0.3 \text{ nm}$ for the Pt/CeO₂ system with a nominal thickness of the Pt deposit of 0.5 nm. Valence band spectra were recorded on Pt/CeO_{2-x}/Cu(111) samples at three different photon energies, 115.0, 121.4, and 124.8 eV. Additionally, Al K α radiation (1486.6 eV) was used to measure the core levels of O 1s, Ce 3d, and Cu 2p_{3/2}. All spectra were acquired at constant pass energy at an emission angle for the photoelectrons of 20° and 0° with respect to the sample normal, while using the X-ray source or synchrotron

radiation as appropriate. The total spectral resolutions achieved with Al K α (1486.6 eV) and synchrotron radiation were 1 eV and 150–200 meV, respectively. The core level spectra were fitted with Voigt profile (Ce 3d, O 1s) after subtraction of a Shirley background. During the experiment, the sample temperature was controlled by a DC power supply passing a current through the Ta wires holding the sample. The actual temperature was measured by K-type thermocouple attached to the rear surface of the sample. Stable temperature and fast cooling after the annealing steps were achieved by simultaneous resistive heating and cooling of the manipulator with liquid nitrogen. The investigated samples were exposed to a total dose of hydrogen (Linde, 99.999%) of 50 L (1 L = 1.3×10^{-6} mbar × s) at 150 K. Hydrogen was dosed by backfilling the UHV chamber to a pressure of 6.6×10^{-8} mbar during 1000 s. In the first part of the experiment, the exposed samples were annealed stepwise. The annealing procedure was performed so that the sample was briefly heated to the stated temperatures and cooled down after each annealing step. In the second part, the samples were repeatedly exposed to 50 L of H₂ at constant temperatures ranging from 150 to 750 K with a step of 50 K.

The sample of Pt/CeO₂/Cu(111) used in TDS study was flash annealed to 500 K prior to hydrogen exposure in order to remove potential surface impurities (such as CO) accumulated during sample preparation.

3. Results and discussion

Essentially, RPES is based on measuring the valence band photoemission spectra at photon energies corresponding to the 4d → 4f resonance either in the Ce³⁺ or in the Ce⁴⁺ ions (see also [25,26] for more details). The Ce³⁺ resonance at a photon energy of 121.4 eV is caused by a Super-Coster-Kronig decay involving electron emission from Ce 4f states located about 1.4 eV below the Fermi edge. The Ce⁴⁺ resonance at a photon energy of 124.8 eV involves emission of O 2p electrons (hybridized with Ce states) from the valence band around 4.0 eV. Additionally, the valence band spectrum at a photon energy of 115 eV is measured corresponding to the “off-resonance” conditions. Typical valence band spectra acquired at the Ce³⁺ and Ce⁴⁺ resonances, as well as off-resonance, are shown in Fig. 1. The resonant enhancements for Ce³⁺ (denoted as D(Ce³⁺)) and for Ce⁴⁺ (D(Ce⁴⁺)) are quantified by calculating the intensity difference between the corresponding features in- and off-resonance. The resonant enhancement ratio (RER), calculated as D(Ce³⁺)/D(Ce⁴⁺), is the direct measure of the change of the cerium oxidation state. Superior sensitivity of RPES in comparison with conventional XPS is illustrated in [Supplementary data](#).

The evolution of the RER during stepwise annealing of CeO₂/Cu(111) and Pt/CeO₂/Cu(111) preexposed to 50 L of hydrogen at 150 K is displayed in Fig. 2. It was reported earlier that pristine CeO₂ does not adsorb molecular hydrogen at temperatures lower than 743 K [13]. Accordingly, no significant variation of the RER was detected for CeO₂/Cu(111). In sharp contrast, substantial and characteristic changes of the RER were observed on Pt/CeO₂/Cu(111) in the temperature region between 150 and 300 K. We designate three particular temperature regions, as indicated in Fig. 2. In the first region below 180 K, the RER remains largely unaffected. This is attributed to the fact that hydrogen dissociatively adsorbs on the Pt nanoparticles, but remains confined to the surface of the Pt particles. Spillover of hydrogen does not yet occur due to the activation barrier associated with crossing the particle boundary.

A very small initial decrease in the RER upon exposure of the sample to hydrogen at 150 K (marked with the red arrow) may be associated with attenuation of Ce³⁺ signal caused by small amounts of contaminations such as co-adsorbed water. At

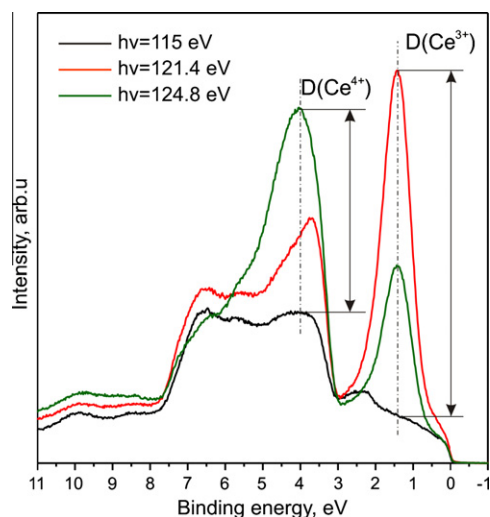


Fig. 1. Typical valence band spectra obtained on Pt/CeO₂/Cu(111) sample containing Ce⁴⁺ and Ce³⁺ ions at $h\nu = 115$ eV (off-resonance mode, black line), 121.4 eV (Ce³⁺ resonance, red line), and 124.8 eV (Ce⁴⁺ resonance, green line). Resonant enhancement ratios (RERs), $D(\text{Ce}^{3+})$ and $D(\text{Ce}^{4+})$, are determined as intensity differences between the valence bands measured in- and off-resonance (see text). (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

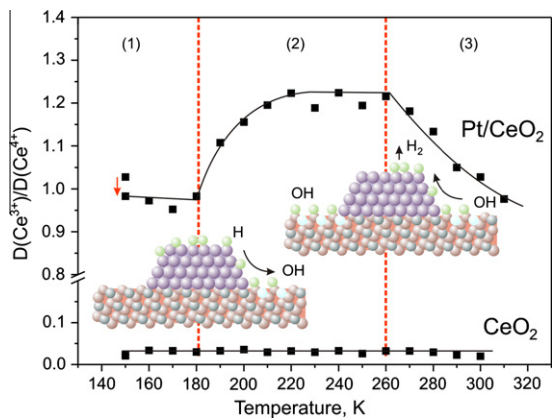


Fig. 2. Development of the RER during stepwise annealing of the Pt/CeO₂/Cu(111) sample exposed to 50 L of hydrogen at 150 K. The inset drawings represent the situation on the surface while switching between the temperature regions. The arrow indicates the initial change of the RER upon hydrogen exposure at 150 K (see text for details).

temperatures exceeding 180 K, we observe a sharp increase in RER, followed by a plateau between 220 and 260 K. According to the mechanism discussed above, we assign these changes to the transfer of dissociated hydrogen to the support. Electron transfer from atomic hydrogen to the oxide causes reduction of Ce⁴⁺ to Ce³⁺ and, simultaneously, produces OH species on the CeO₂ surface [21].

Two conclusions can be derived from this observation: First, the sharp transition temperature shows that a well-defined activation barrier exists for hydrogen spillover. We tentatively attribute this barrier to the process of hydrogen crossing the particle–support boundary. Secondly, the pronounced reduction of ceria shows that the spillover involves the net transfer of neutral hydrogen species. Note that this could involve either transfer in form of neutral hydrogen via the boundary or a two step process with proton transfer via the boundary and separate electron transfer from Pt to Ce⁴⁺.

In the temperature region from 260 K to 310 K, the RER decreases, finally reaching the low-temperature value again (region

3). We assign this effect to the reverse spillover of hydrogen followed by the desorption of H₂. We conclude that the hydrogen spillover and reverse spillover are processes with an activation barrier sufficiently low to be overcome even below room temperature (i.e., <260 K). A dynamic equilibrium between hydrogen on CeO₂ and hydrogen on Pt is established, leading to a constant RER as long as no hydrogen is lost (up to 260 K). As soon as the desorption temperature for hydrogen on Pt is reached, hydrogen desorbs irreversibly in the UHV experiment and is replenished by reverse spillover from the support to the Pt particles. Finally, this process leads to complete loss of hydrogen from the ceria support and, therefore, to reoxidation. Our results agree with findings of Bernal et al. who reported reversible character of reduction and recovery of the oxidation state of ceria-supported Rh catalyst at 295 K [27]. Assuming a symmetric shape of the hydrogen desorption peak, the maximum desorption would be around 285 K. This assumption is in perfect agreement with the desorption temperature of hydrogen reported for Pt(111) [28] and observed experimentally on Pt nanoparticles supported on CeO₂/Cu(111).

The corresponding TDS spectra of the desorption products recorded during annealing of Pt/CeO₂/Cu(111), preexposed to 50 L of hydrogen at 150 K, are shown in Fig. 3. The dominant desorption product is molecular hydrogen. The corresponding peak develops between 150 and 450 K with a distinct maximum located at 285 K. Additionally we detected desorption of a small amount of water over a broad range of temperatures between 180 and 700 K. The observed water contains a contribution from background adsorption, which has been estimated from a blank experiment. Taking into account this correction, we estimate that the fraction of hydrogen oxidized to water does not exceed 15%.

The desorption of molecular hydrogen but not water was also observed by Cordatos et al. in similar low-temperature range (220–320 K) on Pd/CeO₂ [29].

The above finding allows us to understand the complex temperature-dependent behavior of Pt/CeO₂ in reductive atmospheres. Fig. 4 shows the results of a corresponding experiment on the Pt/CeO₂/Cu(111) model catalyst. The experiment was performed so that the sample was repeatedly exposed to 50 L of H₂ at constant temperatures ranging from 150 to 750 K in temperature steps of 50 K.

The evolution of the RER shows a characteristic behavior (see Fig. 4). For the discussion, we differentiate between two temperature regions, designated as the regime of reversible (I, <350 K) and irreversible (II, >350 K) reduction of cerium oxide. In the low-temperature regime (I), reduction and oxidation of cerium oxide is controlled by hydrogen spillover and reverse spillover processes,

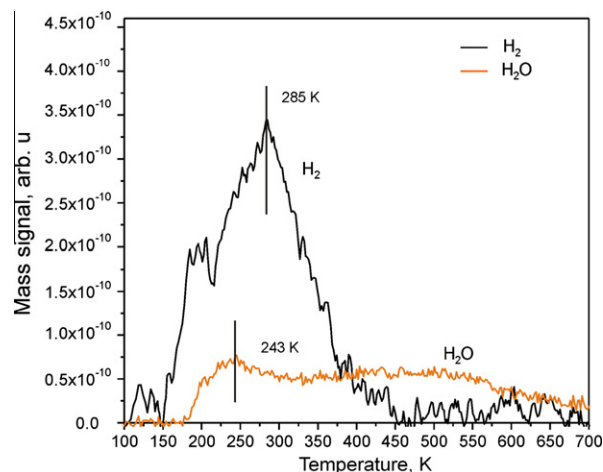


Fig. 3. TDS spectra recorded from Pt/CeO₂/Cu(111) preexposed to 50 L of hydrogen at 150 K.

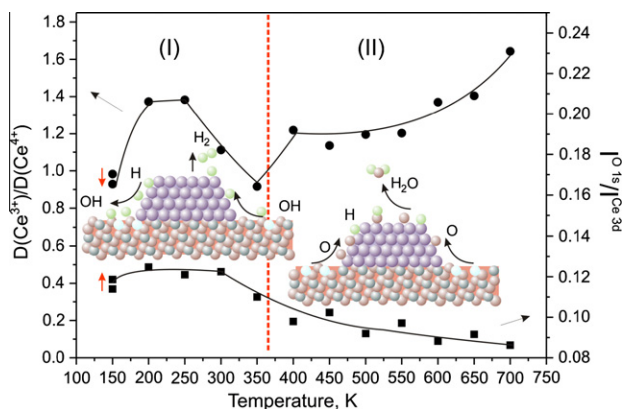


Fig. 4. Development of the RER (circles) and the ratio of the total intensity of O 1s to Ce 3d core levels (squares) upon exposure of the Pt/CeO₂/Cu(111) model catalyst to 50 L of hydrogen at different temperatures. The inset drawings schematically depict the surface processes during reversible (I) and irreversible (II) reduction. The red arrows indicate the changes of RER and O 1s/Ce 3d intensity ratio upon hydrogen exposure at 150 K (see text for discussion). (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

according to the discussion above. At 150 K, spillover is kinetically hindered and only a slight decrease in the RER is observed, mainly due to water contaminations (marked with red arrow, Fig. 4). This situation is similar to that found in region (1), Fig. 2. For H₂ exposure at 200 K, this kinetic hindrance is overcome, and hydrogen spillover leads to a substantial reduction and increase in the RER (compare region (2) in Fig. 2). In the temperature region between 300 and 350 K, the effect of H₂ on the RER is weak. According to the above discussion, this is, however, not due to the fact that hydrogen spillover does not occur. Actually, both spillover and reverse spillover are facile, but hydrogen is rapidly lost due to reverse spillover and desorption from the Pt particles.

The temperature region between 400 and 700 K corresponds to the irreversible (II) regime of ceria reduction (see Fig. 3). In accordance with our previous observations [24,30], the high-temperature region is the one where reverse spillover of oxygen is activated (above 400 K). In the presence of hydrogen, oxygen – provided by reverse spillover – reacts with hydrogen and forms water that subsequently desorbs, leading to a drastic reduction of CeO₂. The evolution of the total intensity ratio of the O 1s and Ce 3d core levels supports this scenario (see Fig. 4). The ratio remains constant below 350 K, but increases above 350 K due to reverse spillover and H₂O formation/desorption. Finally, it should be noted that at temperatures above 700 K molecular hydrogen can directly interact with cerium oxide producing water and oxygen vacancies [13,31,32].

4. Conclusions

We have demonstrated that hydrogen spillover on Pt/CeO₂/Cu(111) involves net transfer of neutral hydrogen, either via H transfer as proposed by Hattori and Shishido [8,9] or via a multi-step process. As a result, hydrogen transfer intrinsically gives rise to the formation of Ce³⁺ centers, which can be monitored with high sensitivity using RPES. Hydrogen spillover is characterized by a small but a very well-defined activation barrier, which leads to kinetic hindrance of spillover at temperatures below 180 K. The corresponding activation barrier may be associated with transport via the particle boundary. Hydrogen spillover and reverse spillover via

the Pt/CeO₂ boundary becomes fully reversible at temperatures as low as 260 K. As a result, complete loss of spilt-over hydrogen and reoxidation of the ceria surface can occur due to reverse H spillover and subsequent H₂ desorption from Pt. Together with the oxygen reverse spillover, activated at above 400 K, H spillover processes provide a consistent picture of the complex changes of the oxidation state of Pt/CeO₂ surfaces in the presence of hydrogen.

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Appendix A. Supplementary material

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:10.1016/j.jcat.2011.09.002.

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