

Structure and photoelectric properties of tetrakis(4-*N*-hexadecylpyridiniumyl)porphyrin/anthraquinone LB films

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Using a 1 : 1 tetrakis(4-*N*-hexadecylpyridiniumyl)porphyrin/anthraquinone (TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ) mixture as film-forming material, the structure and properties of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed monolayers or LB films were studied by π -*A* isotherms, UV-VIS absorption spectra, and low-angle X-ray diffraction (LAXD). The experimental results indicate that the TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixture has good film-forming properties at the air/water interface. The TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed monolayer can be transferred to glass, quartz or SnO₂ optically transparent electrode (OTE) substrates. Most AnQ molecules are incorporated into the cavities between the long alkyl chains of TC₁₆PyP(4) molecules in the mixed monolayer or in LB films. The TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films can be regarded as a two-dimensional host-guest system and show good stability and periodicity. The photovoltaic behaviour of an electrochemical cell containing a TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ LB film, deposited on an SnO₂ OTE, was also investigated. The photocurrent and photovoltage are apparently lower than those for the photocell of pure TC₁₆PyP(4) LB films due to the incorporation of AnQ.

1 Introduction

In recent years, study on the conversion and application of solar energy has been one of the most active aspects in the field of new energetic source development, with the fabrication of novel solar energy cells a predominant goal.^{1,2} Inorganic semiconductive solar energy cells have been applied in the military and aerospace fields, but their high cost and complicated fabrication have hampered extensive application. Solar cells made from organic materials have received increasing interest due mainly to their low cost and ease of fabrication.³ Such organic semiconductors have often been used for electrophotography in the form of thin film.⁴ Porphyrins are thermally and chemically stable organic semiconductors and have been widely used in photovoltaic devices.^{5,6} As far as film-forming materials are concerned, the use of porphyrins for such studies has two main advantages: (i) one can obtain molecules with various molecular structures and (ii) porphyrins are generally fairly insensitive to photodegradation.

We have been studying photophysical and photochemical properties of porphyrin LB films with the aim of constructing molecular electronic devices. In a previous paper⁷ we studied the photovoltaic behavior of an electrochemical cell derived from tetrakis(4-*N*-hexadecylpyridiniumyl)porphyrin [TC₁₆PyP(4), Fig. 1] LB films deposited on an SnO₂ optically transparent electrode (OTE) and found a photocurrent increase in the presence of electron donors or acceptors in the electrolyte solution. Xu and coworkers⁸ reported that an improvement in the photovoltaic effect of a mixed thin film consisting of a porphyrin and a phthalocyanine spin-coated on a SnO₂ electrode was observed in comparison with films coated with the individual dyes. We thus inferred that new optical and photoelectric properties may be observed when a donor or acceptor molecule with appropriate size is incorporated into the cavity of the symmetrically substituted porphyrin TC₁₆PyP(4) by the LB film technique.

Here, we study the film-forming properties of a 1 : 1 TC₁₆PyP(4)/anthraquinone (AnQ) mixture at the air/water interface by using 1 : 1 TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ as the film-forming material, and determine the structure and properties of the porphyrin/AnQ mixed LB films. AnQ was chosen because of its large π -electron system and the observed effective intramolecular photoinduced electron transfer in porphyrin-quinone systems.⁹⁻¹¹ The photoelectric properties of TC₁₆PyP/AnQ mixed LB films, deposited on SnO₂ optically transparent electrodes (SnO₂ OTE), were also investigated in bicell, bielelectrode systems.

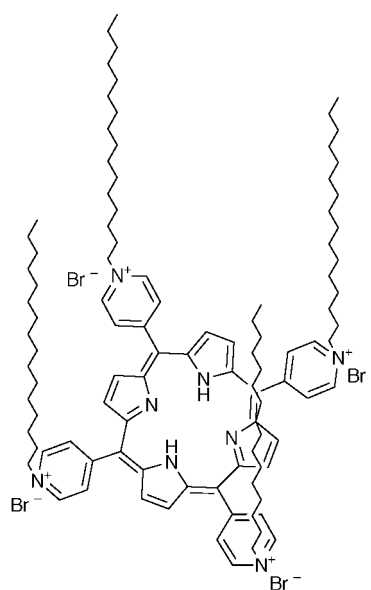


Fig. 1 Structure of TC₁₆PyP(4).

2 Experimental

2.1 Materials

The reagents used were all of analytical grades. The amphiphilic porphyrin TC₁₆PyP(4) was prepared according to a described procedure.¹² All the samples were tested by elemental analysis and their homogeneity was checked by TLC.

2.2 Monolayer formation and LB film preparation

Monolayer formation and deposition were carried out on a Joyle-Loebel Langmuir Trough 4 at room temperature (20 ± 1 °C). The surface pressure was measured by the Wilhelmy method.¹³ Triple-distilled deionized water (pH = 5.8) was used as the subphase. The monolayer was spread on the pure water subphase from a solution of TC₁₆PyP(4) or a solution of equimolar TC₁₆PyP(4) and AnQ. The concentration of TC₁₆PyP(4) and AnQ was 1 × 10⁻⁴ M in all these spreading solutions. After the spreading solutions were spread onto the subphase using a microsyringe, compression was started and the π -*A* curves were recorded 15 min later when the solvent had evaporated. All the substrates were cleaned successively with chloroform, acetone and isopropyl alcohol and finally subjected to ultrasound for 30 min before use. The LB films of TC₁₆PyP(4) and TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ were deposited on quartz slides for electronic spectra, glass slides for LAXD and SnO₂ OTE for photovoltaic measurements respectively, *via* the vertical dipping method, resulting in a fairly good deposition of a typical Y-mode film with a transfer ratio of 1.02. Monolayer deposition was performed under a surface pressure of 30 mN m⁻¹ unless otherwise stated, while the dipping speed was 2 mm min⁻¹.

2.3 Absorption spectra and LAXD measurements

UV-VIS absorption spectra were measured using a Shimadzu UV-160A spectrophotometer. LAXD measurements were carried out on a D/max- γ A X-ray diffractometer (Cu-K α line radiation, $\lambda = 1.5405$ Å).

2.4 Photoelectrochemical measurements

The photocurrent and photovoltage were determined on a computer-controlled microcurrentmeter (Fig. 2). The electrochemical cell was made up of the bicell, which was linked by an agar salt bridge in order to increase the photovoltaic signal/noise ratio. The electrochemical cell thus prepared as well as all the electrical cables was shielded with an iron box against electromagnetic perturbations. A 500 W xenon arc lamp was used as the light source. Since the blank photocurrent due to SnO₂ OTE excitation had a measurable value at wavelengths below 390 nm, illumination was performed with wavelengths

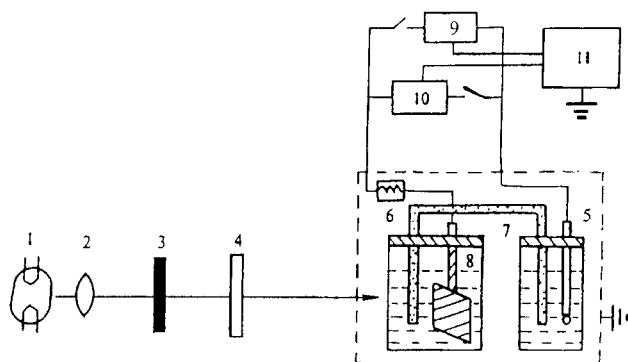


Fig. 2 Schematic diagram of the setup for the photocurrent measurement. 1, light source; 2, focusing lens; 3, shutter; 4, cut-off filter; 5, SCE; 6, resistor; 7, agar salt bridge; 8, TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ-deposited SnO₂ OTE; 9, potentiostat; 10, picoammeter; 11, computer for data retrieval.

above 390 nm, using a cut-off filter. The photocurrent and photovoltage were measured with a homemade picoammeter and potentiostat, respectively. The photovoltaic signals were recorded on a computer for data treatment. The supporting electrolyte was 0.1 mol L⁻¹ KCl aqueous solution, to which an electron donor or acceptor could be added.¹⁴ The experimental photovoltaic cell can be represented as: SnO₂ OTE/TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ LB film/0.1 mol L⁻¹ KCl aqueous solution/agar salt bridge/saturated KCl solution/SCE.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 π -*A* isotherms of a pure TC₁₆PyP(4) monolayer and of a TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed monolayer

Fig. 3 compares the π -*A* isotherms of a pure TC₁₆PyP(4) monolayer and a 1 : 1 TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed monolayer on a pure water subphase. The solid and dashed lines in Fig. 3 indicate the π -*A* isotherms of pure TC₁₆PyP(4) and the 1 : 1 TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixture, respectively. All curves were reproducible. As can be seen, both TC₁₆PyP(4) and 1 : 1 TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixtures form stable monolayers at the air/water interface (with collapse pressure > 45 mN m⁻¹). For the pure TC₁₆PyP(4) monolayer, the π -*A* isotherm shows a distinct phase transition and an abrupt increase in slope, with no well defined collapse being observed up to 50 mN m⁻¹, the limit of our apparatus. At a surface pressure of *ca.* 30 mN m⁻¹, the monomolecular area (extrapolating the linear part of the π -*A* isotherm to the abscissa) is 2.20 nm². In a previous paper⁷ we reported that a molecular area of *ca.* 2.40 nm² is expected if the porphyrin ring is oriented parallel to the aqueous surface while an area of 1.10 nm² is expected if it is oriented perpendicular to the aqueous surface according to a Corey-Pauling-Koltun (CPK) molecular model.¹⁵ We thus infer that the porphyrin ring is oriented with an angle of 24° to the aqueous surface. For the 1 : 1 mixture of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ, the collapse pressure is 45 mN m⁻¹. The apparent monomolecular area at 30 mN m⁻¹ (extrapolating the solid film part of the π -*A* isotherm to the abscissa) is 2.10 nm² (area calculations are based on the concentration of porphyrin molecules).

For most mixed monolayers, the apparent monomolecular area obtained from π -*A* isotherms should be greater than that of each component. However, the monomolecular area of the TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixture is slightly smaller than that of TC₁₆PyP(4). This indicates that anthraquinone molecules do not occupy the space between porphyrin molecules in mixed monolayers. This is similar to Yang's result¹⁶ that the

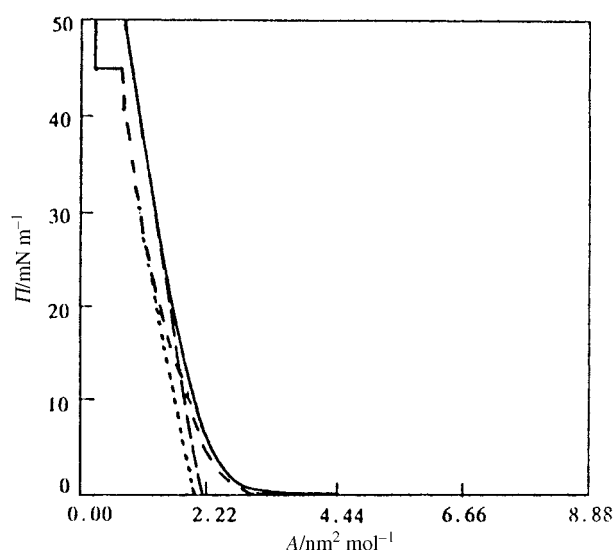


Fig. 3 π -*A* isotherms of a pure TC₁₆PyP(4) monolayer (solid line) and TC₁₆PyP(4)/anthraquinone (1 : 1) mixed monolayer (dashed line).

molecular area of Mn(III)TPP(CO₂H) decreased with the incorporation of *n*-hexadecane.

3.2 LAXD of TC₁₆PyP(4) LB films and TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films

Fig. 4 and 5 show the LAXD patterns of pure TC₁₆PyP(4) LB films and TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films, respectively. There is a well defined Bragg diffraction peak at 2.20° for pure TC₁₆PyP(4) LB films and at 2.01° for TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films, which corresponds to the (001) Bragg peak. In addition relatively weak subsidiary peaks were observed at angles below the (001) Bragg peak. The number of subsidiary diffraction peaks η can be predicted by the relation $\eta = (N/2) - 2$ (N = number of unit cells).¹⁷ These results show that both TC₁₆PyP LB films and TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films show good interlayer order. According to Bragg's formula: $n\lambda = 2d\sin\theta$, the value of d is 4.05 nm for TC₁₆PyP(4) and 4.26 nm for 1 : 1 TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ. For Y-mode LB films, $d/2$ is equal to the monolayer thickness. Therefore, the monolayer thickness of TC₁₆PyP(4) LB films and TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films is 2.03 and 2.13 nm, respectively, *i.e.*, the monolayer thickness of the TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB film is slightly larger than that of the pure TC₁₆PyP(4) LB film. This fact may be explained by hydrophobic interactions of the long hydro-

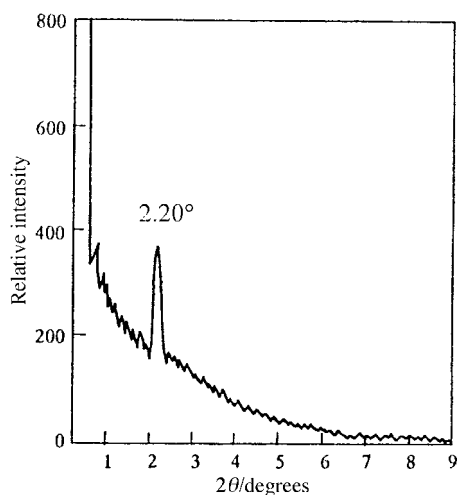


Fig. 4 LAXD patterns of a pure TC₁₆PyP(4) LB film (39 monolayers).

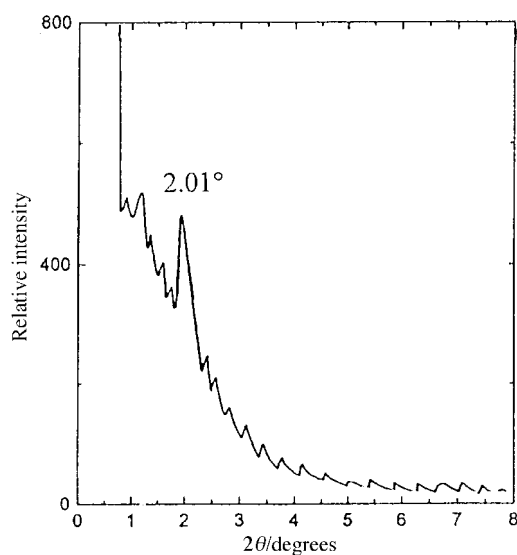


Fig. 5 LAXD patterns of a TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB film (39 monolayers).

carbon chains being intensified in the mixed monolayer. As a result, the long chains of TC₁₆PyP(4) in the mixed LB films are slightly more extended than in the pure TC₁₆PyP(4) monolayer. This result is similar to that found in the literature for related systems.¹⁵

TC₁₆PyP(4) is a typical amphiphilic molecule with four hydrocarbon chains extending to the air phase and the porphyrin ring nearly lying flat on the air/water interface in the monolayer, *i.e.* resembling a cylinder with a large cavity. The anthraquinone molecule is hydrophobic, so that when the mixed TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ monolayer is compressed, anthraquinone molecules will be incorporated into the cavity of the cylindrical porphyrin molecule. We infer that the anthraquinone molecules are arranged in the cavity within the long chains of TC₁₆PyP(4) in monolayers of the mixed LB films.

3.3 UV-VIS spectra of TC₁₆PyP(4) LB films and TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films

Fig. 6 compares the absorption spectra of the 1 : 1 TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB film (solid line) with that of a 1 : 1 TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed solution (dashed line). The absorption spectra of the 1 : 1 TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed solution is nearly identical to the sum of the spectra of the pure porphyrin and AnQ, indicating that there are no strong interactions between the two chromophores in the ground state. For the 1 : 1 TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB film, the absorption bands of TC₁₆PyP(4) and AnQ are red-shifted relative to those in solution with concomitant broadening of $\Delta\nu_{1/2}$ (width at half height). These changes are attributed to the incorporation of AnQ molecules and close intermolecular contacts between TC₁₆PyP(4) and AnQ, resulting in overlap of the large π bands of TC₁₆PyP(4) and AnQ. This leads to an intermolecular transition energy decrease and the absorption bands are thus red-shifted.¹⁸

The absorption bands of TC₁₆PyP(4) in the mixed LB films are slightly blue-shifted (*ca.* 2–5 nm) relative to those of TC₁₆PyP(4) in pure TC₁₆PyP(4) LB films. AnQ molecules can accept electrons while the porphyrin ring can act as an electron donor. It is possible that interactions between the anthraquinone and porphyrin occur when anthraquinone molecules are incorporated into the porphyrin cavity, as in calixarene/C₆₀¹⁹ and poly(*N*-vinylcarbazole)/C₆₀ mixed systems.²⁰ Such interactions may make it more difficult for the porphyrin to form aggregates. Because the absorptions of porphyrins are mainly determined by their aggregation state, we observe that the absorption bands of TC₁₆PyP(4) in mixed LB films are slightly blue-shifted relative to that for the pure porphyrin film. These observations also support the inference that anthraquinone molecules are incorporated into the cavity of TC₁₆PyP(4) in the TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films.

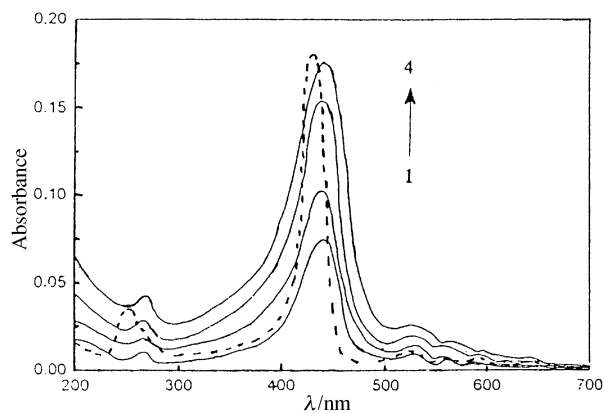


Fig. 6 UV-VIS absorption spectra of a mixture of TC₁₆PyP(4) and AnQ in CHCl₃ and LB films [CHCl₃ solution (dashed line), LB films (solid lines): 1→4, 6, 14, 26 and 38 monolayers].

Measurement of the absorbance at 263 nm (C) and 433 nm (B) in the UV–VIS spectra of 1 : 1 TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films vs. the number of layers results in a straight line (Fig. 7), and indicates that the TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed monolayers at the air/water interface are well transferred onto the substrate and that the microscopic environment of the porphyrin and TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ remains unchanged with layer number.

3.4 Photoelectric properties of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films

Photocurrent–time response curves of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films (three layers) are shown in Fig. 8. Fig. 8(a) shows the photocurrent–time response curve of SnO₂ OTE itself. Owing to the use of a 390-nm cut-off filter, the blank photocurrent of SnO₂ OTE is almost zero and so interference of the SnO₂ OTE can be disregarded. Fig. 8(b) shows the photocurrent–time response curve of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films, in an electrolyte solution of aqueous 0.1 mol L⁻¹ KCl. As can be seen, the photocurrent shows a rapid rise and reached a maximum value of ca. 40 nA cm⁻² once the light was turned on, followed by an exponential decrease and reaching a steady value of ca. 20 nA cm⁻² several seconds later. Turning off the light, the photocurrent rapidly declined to zero. Such a behaviour has been reported for a chlorophyll layer deposited on an SnO₂ OTE.¹⁴ During the first stage of irradiation, because there is an inadequate supply of electrons by a donor to TC₁₆PyP(4)*, partial oxidative decomposition of TC₁₆PyP(4) may possibly occur following electron injection to SnO₂. Then, the photocurrent shows a decay; as a result of movement of donors in the electrolyte solution, there will be an equilibrium

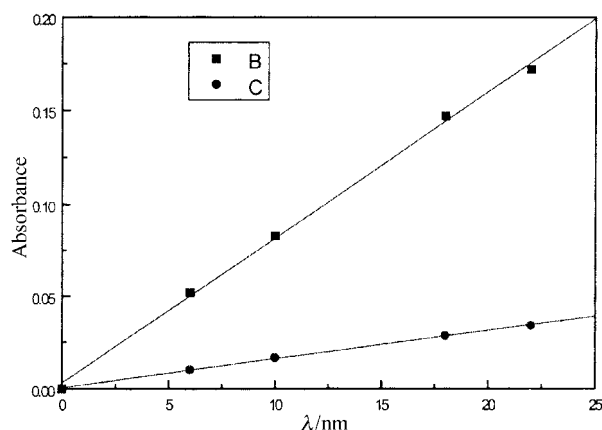


Fig. 7 Dependence of absorbance at 263 nm (C) and 433 nm (B) for mixed LB films.

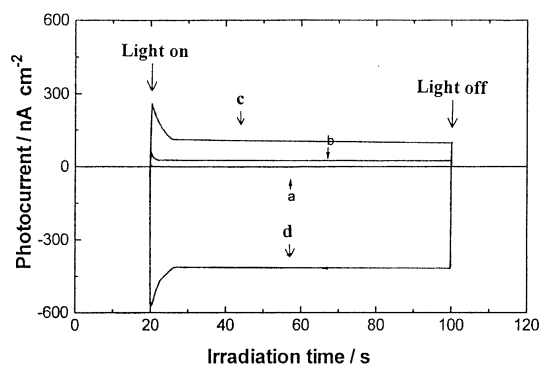


Fig. 8 Photocurrent–time responses of (a) a clean SnO₂ OTE (0.1 M KCl electrolyte solution) and of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ LB films (three monolayers), electrolyte solution: (b) 0.1 M KCl, (c) 0.1 M KCl+80 mM ascorbic acid and (d) 0.1 M KCl+1 mM *p*-benzoquinone solution. Light source: 500 W xenon arc light (>390 nm), 80 mW cm⁻².

between the number of electrons injected to SnO₂ from TC₁₆PyP(4)* and the number of electrons abstracted from a donor, which leads to a dynamic equilibrium level of TC₁₆PyP(4)* molecules in the LB films so leading to a levelling off of the photocurrent.

When electron donating ascorbic acid (80 mmol L⁻¹) was added to the 0.1 mol L⁻¹ KCl electrolyte solution, the maximum and steady photocurrent were increased to 250 and 100 nA cm⁻², respectively [Fig. 8(c)]. Fig. 8(d) shows the photocurrent–time response of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ LB films in the presence of the acceptor *p*-benzoquinone (1 mmol L⁻¹) in the 0.1 mol L⁻¹ KCl electrolyte solution. With the addition of the electron acceptor, the maximum and steady photocurrent were increased to -580 and -420 nA cm⁻², respectively. Clearly, however, the direction of photocurrent is reversed.

Fig. 9 shows the photovoltage–time response curves of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ LB films. Fig. 9(a) shows the photovoltage–time response curve of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ LB films (three layers) in an electrolyte solution of aqueous 0.1 mol L⁻¹ KCl containing 80 mmol L⁻¹ ascorbic acid. The photovoltage rapidly reached a maximum value of 50 mV once the sample was irradiated and during illumination, the photovoltage remained constant. Turning off the light, the photovoltage showed slow exponential decay. When the electrolyte solution was changed to 0.1 mol L⁻¹ KCl aqueous solution containing 1 mmol L⁻¹ *p*-benzoquinone, the photovoltage–time response curve of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ LB films is as in Fig. 9(b). The photovoltage was -80 mV at the commencement of irradiation and remained constant during the illumination. Turning off the light, the photovoltage also showed slow exponential decay. It is remarkable that there is an obvious difference in the decay characteristics of the photocurrent and photovoltage and similar phenomena have been observed in the photovoltage of an R-phycoerythrin/SnO₂ OTE electrochemical cell.²¹ At present, the cause of this difference is unclear and further careful investigations will be necessary.

In a previous study⁷ we suggested that the photoelectric response of TC₁₆PyP(4) LB films is a result of a photo-induced charge transfer mechanism. The photocurrent increases in the presence of electron donor were attributed to supersensitization. Such a mechanism and interpretation may also be applicable to the photoelectric response of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films. Here, we emphasise the consequences of the effect of incorporation of AnQ into the cavity of TC₁₆PyP(4) on the photovoltaic effect of TC₁₆PyP(4) LB films and quantitative data on the photocurrent and photovoltage of the two photocells, TC₁₆PyP(4) and TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ are summarized in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Examination of the data shows that under identical conditions, the direction of the photocurrent and photovoltage of the two photocells is identical and the variations of the

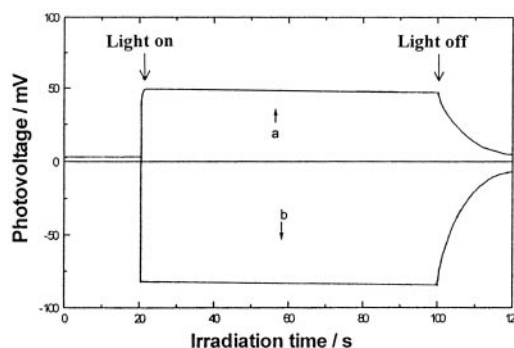


Fig. 9 Photovoltage–time responses of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ LB films (three monolayers). Electrolyte composition: (a) 0.1 M KCl+80 mM ascorbic acid solution; (b) 0.1 M KCl+1 mM *p*-benzoquinone aqueous solution. Light source: 500 W xenon arc light (>390 nm), 80 mW cm⁻².

Table 1 Photocurrent data^a

Photocell	0.1 M KCl	0.1 M KCl+80 mM AA ^b	0.1 M KCl+1 mM <i>p</i> -benzoquinone
Pure TC ₁₆ PyP(4) LB film	60–30	400–250	–950 to –800
TC ₁₆ PyP(4)/AnQ LB film	40–20	250–100	–580 to –420

^aPhotocurrent is in nA cm⁻². ^bAA=ascorbic acid.

Table 2 Photovoltage data^a

Photocell	0.1 M KCl+ 80 mM AA ^b	0.1 M KCl+ 1 mM <i>p</i> -benzoquinone
Pure TC ₁₆ PyP(4) LB film	90	–110
TC ₁₆ PyP(4)/AnQ LB film	50	–80

^aPhotocurrent is in mV. ^bAA=ascorbic acid.

photocurrent and photovoltage are similar. However, the values of the photocurrent and photovoltage of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films are lower than those observed in the TC₁₆PyP(4) LB films. Such a result can reasonably be rationalized as follows.

The decrease of photocurrent and photovoltage of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films relative to those of pure TC₁₆PyP(4) LB films in a 0.1 mol L⁻¹ KCl electrolyte solution can be explained by effective removal of the electron from excited TC₁₆PyP(4)* by AnQ, so reducing the efficiency and the velocity of electron injection to the conduction band of the SnO₂ electrode.

When an electron donor is added to the 0.1 mol L⁻¹ KCl electrolyte solution, two possible pathways are possible leading to a decrease of the photocurrent and photovoltage of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ mixed LB films: (i) competitive abstracting of the electron from the electron donor between the cation radical TC₁₆PyP(4)⁺ (resulting from electron injection to the conduction band of the SnO₂ electrode from the excited porphyrin TC₁₆PyP(4)* and AnQ, so reducing the regeneration of the photoactive state TC₁₆PyP(4)*; (ii) competitive abstracting of the electron from the electron donor between the excited porphyrin TC₁₆PyP(4)* and AnQ reducing the production of anion radical TC₁₆PyP(4)⁻, which has a stronger electron donating ability than TC₁₆PyP(4)*, so reducing the efficiency of electron injection to the SnO₂ electrode.

For an electrolyte solution containing the electron acceptor *p*-benzoquinone, both *p*-benzoquinone and AnQ directly capture the electron of the excited TC₁₆PyP(4)*, producing the cation radical TC₁₆PyP(4)⁺, leading to electron injection from the conduction band of SnO₂ to the reduced porphyrin TC₁₆PyP(4)⁺, resulting in a reversed photocurrent. In addition, AnQ molecules in mixed LB films also extract some conduction electrons injected from TC₁₆PyP(4)*, which reduces the efficiency and speed of electron transfer from the conduction band of the SnO₂ electrode to the reduced porphyrin TC₁₆PyP(4)⁺, so reducing the photocurrent and photovoltage. A detailed mechanism involving these influential factors will be further elaborated by future studies.

Conclusions

A 1:1 TC₁₆PyP(4)/anthraquinone mixture can form a stable mixed monolayer at the air/water interface. TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ

mixed monolayers can be transferred to glass, quartz and SnO₂ OTE substrates. Most AnQ molecules are incorporated in the cavities between the long alkyl chains of TC₁₆PyP(4) molecules in a mixed monolayer and in LB films. The porphyrin/AnQ mixed LB film can be regarded as a two-dimensional host-guest system. TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ LB films have good stability, homogeneous structure and periodicity. The photocurrent and photovoltage of an electrochemical cell of TC₁₆PyP(4)/AnQ LB films deposited on SnO₂ OTE are apparently lower than those from a photocell of pure TC₁₆PyP(4) LB films owing to the incorporation of AnQ.

Acknowledgements

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