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Photooxidation of benzene to phenol by ruthenium bipyridine complexes grafted on mesoporous silica FSM-16

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Abstract

Catalytic performances of *bis*- and *tris*(bipyridine) Ru complexes grafted on mesoporous FSM-16 were studied in the photooxidation of benzene to phenol using H₂O₂ as an oxidant. [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂/FSM-16 showed a high activity under UV-irradiation, and the turnover number (TON) of phenol was 430 based on Ru in 24 h, and the selectivity to phenol among the products was 98%. Non-grafted [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ complex gave a phenol TON of 170, thus demonstrating the promotion effect of grafting [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ on FSM-16. The hydroxylation of benzene to phenol by [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂/FSM-16 slightly occurred in the dark (TON = 34 in 24 h), but the irradiation remarkably increased the TON of phenol by a factor of 13. The absorption peak of [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ in the UV–VIS spectroscopy decreased under the reaction conditions; however, the recovered catalyst showed almost the same activity for phenol formation in the repeated runs. It is proposed that coodinatively unsaturated [Ru(bpy)_n]²⁺ (n = 1, 2) are generated by the UV-irradiation to [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ on FSM-16. These species activate H₂O₂ to give an OH radical that attacks benzene as in the Fenton-type mechanism. Grafting of the Ru complex on FSM-16 may enhance the reaction of a hydroxycyclohexadienyl radical with the isolated Ru center. © 2001 Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Photooxidation; Benzene; Phenol; Ru complex; FSM-16

1. Introduction

Direct and selective hydroxylation of benzene to phenol is currently one of difficult and challenging goals in heterogeneous and homogeneous catalyses as a potentially alternative route of the current process [1-7]. The Fenton's reagent method, which uses hydrogen peroxide as an oxidant, is widely studied in the direct oxidation of benzene [8–15]. The reaction

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mechanism of the Fenton method has been proposed as follows; H_2O_2 reacts with Fe^{2+} (or other metal ions) to give a hydroxyl radical and Fe^{3+} , and the hydroxyl radical attacks benzene to produce a hydroxycyclohexadienyl radical. Then the hydroxycyclohexadienyl radical is oxidized by Fe^{3+} to form phenol and Fe^{2+} . The Fenton method is frequently accompanied by the formation of by-products such as biphenyl and further oxidation compounds of phenol. Biphenyl is formed by coupling of hydroxycyclohexadienyl radicals and subsequent dehydration, while catechol, hydroquinone and *p*-benzoquinone by further oxidation of phenol.

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Ruthenium complexes having polypyridine ligands are intensively studied in artificial photosynthesis. In most cases, the Ru complexes are used as a photosensitizer to transmit the light energy to other catalysts or substrates [16–18]. However, the catalytic reactions promoted by [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ (bpy = 2,2'-bipyridine) have been limitedly studied [19,20].

We have reported the "ship-in-bottle" synthesis of metal phthalocyanines in NaY zeolites which exhibit high regioselectivity in catalytic oxidation of *n*-haxane and hydrogenation of butadiene due to the isolated active species in micropores of NaY [21,22]. Recently, the "ship-in-bottle" approach is extended to mesoporous silicas such as FSM-16 and MCM-41, and we have shown the preparation of hybrid composites of metalloporphyrins [23], metal clusters [24], and fullerenes [25] in mesoporous FSM-16 and their catalytic activity in photooxidation of alkene and benzene. In this work, Ru complexes having bipyridine and chloride ligands such as $[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2$, [Ru(bpy)₂Cl₂], and RuCl₃ are grafted on mesoporous FSM-16, and their catalytic performances are investigated in liquid-phase photooxidation of benzene to phenol. A part of this work was preliminarily reported [26].

2. Experimental

2.1. Catalyst preparation

 $[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2$ (Aldrich), $[Ru(bpy)_2Cl_2]$ (Aldrich) and $RuCl_3 \cdot 3H_2O$ (Wako) were used as received. FSM-16 (channel diameter 2.7 nm) was prepared according to the literature method [27]. Benzene (Wako, GR grade) and hydrogen peroxide (32% aqueous, Mitsubishi Gas Chemical, GR grade) were used without further purification.

[Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂, [Ru(bpy)₂Cl₂], and RuCl₃ were grafted on FSM-16 by the impregnation method (Fig. 1). Typically, FSM-16 (3.00 g) was evacuated at 623 K and 10^{-3} Torr for 2 h, and to the pretreated FSM-16 was added a solution of [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ (30.0 mg, 4.01×10^{-5} mol) in distilled water (30 ml) under N₂. The mixture was vigorously stirred for 4 h. Then the mixture was evaporated to dryness and was dried at 10^{-3} Torr at room temperature for 12 h. [Ru(bpy)₂Cl₂] and RuCl₃·3H₂O were similarly impregnated on FSM-16, but methanol was used as a solvent for [Ru(bpy)₂Cl₂] due to its low solubility in water.



Fig. 1. Grafting of [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ on FSM-16.



Fig. 2. A quartz reactor for photochemistry.

2.2. Catalytic reaction

Photooxidation of benzene was performed in a quartz reactor for photochemistry (Fig. 2), and a high-pressure mercury lamp (USHIO UM-102, 100 W, 250–600 nm) was used as a light source.

A mixture of benzene (75.0 ml, 840 mmol) and aq. H₂O₂ (32%, 75.0 ml, 710 mmol) was stirred with a heterogeneous or homogeneous catalyst (containing 5.7×10^{-3} mmol of Ru) under the photoirradiation at 300 K. A small portion of reaction mixture (500 µl) was periodically sampled from the reactor, and products were quantitatively analyzed by GC (Shimadzu GC-14B, column: J&W Scientific DB-WAX 0.25 mm × 30 m), GC-MS (Perkin Elmer Q-Mass 910, column: J&W Scientific DB-WAX 0.25 mm × 30 m) and HPLC (Shimadzu LC-10A, column: Waters µ-Bondasphere 5 m—C₁₈ 100 Å, 3.9 mm × 150 mm).

In the reactions by RuCl₃, RuCl₃/FSM-16, and [Ru(bpy)₂Cl₂]/FSM-16, brown solid was observed as a by-product. After filtration the solid was washed with benzene and distilled water, and was dried under vacuum at room temperature. FT-IR (Shimadzu FTIR-8100M spectrophotometer, KBr, cm⁻¹) gave

peaks at 3400 (ν (O–H)), 2920 and 2870 (ν (C–H)), 1740 (ν (C=O)), 1600(ν (C=C)), 1200 and 1100 (ν (C–O)), which were ascribed to further oxidation products of phenol (vide infra).

In the experiment of the activity-dependence on the wavelength of UV-light, an ultrahigh-pressure mercury lamp (USHIO USH-500D, 500 W, 250–600 nm) and color glass cut-off filters (Toshiba L-39S: 390–800 nm and UV-D33S: 260–400 nm) were used.

2.3. Catalyst characterization

We studied the spectral change of $[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2$ complex under the conditions of catalytic reactions, and for this purpose the solution of non-grafted $[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2$ complex was used because of the difficulty in following the UV–VIS spectral change of the powdered $[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2/FSM-16$ catalyst. In order to evaluate the amount of $[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2$ dissolved in the lower water layer of the reaction mixture, UV–VIS spectra were acquired on a Shimadzu UV-2200A spectrophotometer using a quartz cell for liquid samples. A portion of water layer (50 µl) was sampled and was diluted in water to 0.50 ml of total volume for the UV–VIS spectroscopy. On the other hand, in diffuse-reflectance UV–VIS spectroscopy, Ru complexes grafted on FSM-16 gave similar spectra to those of complexes in solutions in the transmission mode.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Catalytic hydroxylation of benzene to phenol

Various Ru complexes having bpy and/or Cl ligands were grafted on FSM-16, and their catalytic performances were tested in the photooxidation of benzene (Eq. (1)). The results are summarized in Table 1.

$$\begin{array}{c|c}
\hline & H_2O_2, h\nu \\
\hline Catalyst & -OH \\
\hline (1)
\end{array}$$

By comparing the catalytic activities of $[Ru(bpy)_3]$ -Cl₂, $[Ru(bpy)_2Cl_2]$, and $RuCl_3$ on FSM-16, $[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2$ grafted on FSM-16 exhibited the highest TON (430) of phenol in 24 h under photoirradiation (Table 1, Run 1). Other minor product detected in this run was *p*-benzoquinone (TON = 6), thus giving phenol selectivity of 98% among the products. The TONs for bis(bpy) complex $[Ru(bpy)_2Cl_2]/FSM-16$ and $RuCl_3/FSM-16$ were lower than that for $[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2/FSM-16$: 280 and

Table 1 Photooxidation of benzene to phenol by Ru catalysts with $H_2O_2^{a}$

360, respectively (Runs 2 and 3). In these cases, however, the TONs of *p*-benzoquinone were higher than that for [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂/FSM-16. Furthermore, in the reactions by RuCl₃, RuCl₃/FSM-16, and [Ru(bpy)₂Cl₂]/FSM-16, brown solid was observed as a by-product (Runs 2, 3, 7 and 10). The solids were preliminarily assigned to oligomers or polymers of phenol and/or *p*-benzoquinone from their IR spectra (see Section 2). Therefore, the selectivities to phenol for [Ru(bpy)₂Cl₂]/FSM-16 and RuCl₃/FSM-16 were lower than that for [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂/FSM-16. No leaching of $[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2$ from FSM-16 to the solution phase was observed after the catalytic runs. When FSM-16 was used as a control run, H₂O₂ was vigorously decomposed to evolve O2 but no oxidation of benzene was observed under the irradiation.

From Runs 1–3 in Table 1, it is suggested that bipyridine ligands have a role to reduce further oxidation of phenol to *p*-benzoquinone and to the brown solid. Substantial decomposition of H_2O_2 was also observed for [Ru(bpy)₂Cl₂]/FSM-16 (H₂O₂ conversion 79%) and RuCl₃/FSM-16 (89%). On the other hand, the decomposition of H_2O_2 was decreased for [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂/FSM-16 (23%). The addition of excess bpy to RuCl₃/FSM-16 or [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂/FSM-16 decreased the TON of phenol, but the formation of *p*-benzoquinone and solid by-product was effectively suppressed (Table 1, Runs 4 and 5).

Non-grafted $[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2$ complex was also used as a catalyst, and the TON of phenol was 170

Run	Catalyst	TON/Ru		Brown solid ^b (mg)
		Phenol	<i>p</i> -Benzoquinone	
1	[Ru(bpy) ₃]Cl ₂ /FSM-16	430	6	0
2	$[Ru(bpy)_2Cl_2]/FSM-16$	280	48	9
3	RuCl ₃ /FSM-16	360	20	25
4	$[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2/FSM-16 + 13 bpy$	74	7	0
5	$RuCl_3/FSM-16 + 10 bpy$	180	8	0
6	[Ru(bpy) ₃]Cl ₂	170	3	0
7	RuCl ₃	83	8	20
8 ^c	$[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2$	0	0	0
9 ^c	$[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2/FSM-16$	34	8	0
10 ^c	RuCl ₃ /FSM-16	260	41	30

^a Reaction conditions: benzene 840 mmol, H_2O_2 710 mmol, Ru 5.7×10^{-3} mmol, 300 K, 24 h, high pressure Hg lamp (Ushio UM-102, 100 W, 250–600 nm).

^b Oligomer or polymer of phenol and/or *p*-benzoquinone (see text).

^c Reactions in the dark.

(Table 1, Run 6), which was significantly lower than that for [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂/FSM-16. RuCl₃ also gave a lower TON of phenol than the grafted RuCl₃/FSM-16. These results unambiguously demonstrate that grafting Ru complexes on FSM-16 effectively promotes the catalytic activity, which may be due to the isolation of the active Ru complex generated in the reaction.

Catalytic reactions without irradiation were also performed, and under the dark conditions, no or slight amount of phenol was observed for non-grafted and grafted [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ (Table 1, Runs 8 and 9). On the other hand, RuCl₃/FSM-16 gave a high TON of 260 (Run 10). However, the irradiation greatly enhanced the phenol production for [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ and [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂/FSM-16 catalysts. Fig. 3 shows the time-course of TON of phenol by [Ru(bpy)3]Cl2/FSM-16 with or without UV-VIS light. When the UV-VIS light was on after 3h of the reaction, the phenol formation was significantly enhanced, but the formation rate was again reduced at 6h when the light was off. This suggests that a photoactivation of catalytic species is involved in the catalytic cycle of hydroxylation mechanism.

3.2. Mechanistic study

off

on

5

off

300

250

200

150

100

50

0

0

TON of phenol

We measured the conversion of [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ in the photoreaction by the spectroscopic methods. In

on

light on-off

15

dark

20

25



Time (h)

10



Wavelength (nm)

Fig. 4. UV-VIS spectral change of [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ in H₂O₂ under the UV-irradiation. Conditions: [Ru(bpy)3]Cl2 0.27 mmol, benzene 840 mmol, H_2O_2 710 mmol, Ru 5.7×10^{-3} mmol, high pressure Hg lamp (100 W, $\lambda = 250-600$ nm), 300 K.

the catalytic reaction by [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ (e.g. Table 1, Run 6), the original orange color of $[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2$ turned to dark red. In UV-VIS spectroscopy of the reaction mixture, the peak at 453 nm due to MLCT [28] gradually decreased during the irradiation (Fig. 4), implying that the partial photosubstitution of the bpy ligand from Ru center. Without the photoirradiation, no spectral change was observed for [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂. The Ru complex was recovered after 24 h of irradiation by evaporating the solution. The resulting solid was characterized by UV-VIS and IR spectroscopies. The UV-VIS spectrum of the solid in water gave peaks at 242, 255, 287 and 458 nm in the region of 220-800 nm, indicating the presence of bpy ligand ([Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ in water: 243, 248, 254, 280 and 453 nm). The IR spectrum of the solid also gave a band due to bpy ligand at $1400 \,\mathrm{cm}^{-1}$. In addition, strong broad bands were observed at 1590 (ν (C=C)) and 1150–1100 (ν (C–O)) cm⁻¹, suggesting the presence of a phenoxo ligand. Therefore, we infer that the recovered solid contains bpy and OPh ligands. The recovered sample was used again as a catalyst. In this second catalytic run, a similar TON of phenol was obtained to that of the first catalytic run. This result indicates that [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ is converted to a catalytic active species having one or two bpy ligands under the UV–VIS irradiation, and that the resulting active species can be used in the repeated catalytic runs.

0.8

0.7

0.6

0.5

600

0 h 3 h

6 h

9 h

Table 2 Wavelength dependence photocatalytic of activity of [Ru(bpy)3]Cl2/FSM-16a Wavelength (nm) TON/Ru Phenol p-Benzoquinone 250-400 100 2 2 390-600 41 4 250-600 96

^a Reaction conditions: benzene 840 mmol, H_2O_2 710 mmol, [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂/FSM-16 (Ru 5.7×10⁻³ mmol), 300 K, 9 h, ultrahigh pressure Hg lamp (Ushio USH-500D, 500 W, 250–600 nm).

15

0.4

The dependence of the catalytic activity of $[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2$ on wavelength was studied (Table 2). Irradiation of the light at 250-400 nm corresponds to the MC excitation of this complex [28], and the TON of phenol was 100, being almost the same as that for the irradiation at 250–600 nm. On the other hand, the TON of phenol was decreased from 96 to 41 at 390-600 nm of the MLCT excited range. It is known that the MC excited state of [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ leads to the cleavage of Ru-N bond to give vacant sites at the Ru center (Fig. 5) [28]. From the wavelength dependence of the catalytic activity and the UV-VIS and IR spectra of the recovered catalyst from the reaction mixture, we suggest that coordinatively unsaturated $[\operatorname{Ru}(\operatorname{bpy})_n]^{2+}$ (n = 1 or 2) is formed by the dissociation of bpy from the photoexcited $[Ru(bpy)_3]^{2+,*}$ species. The $[Ru(bpy)_n]^{2+}$ species reacts with phenol as a product to give $[\operatorname{Ru}(\operatorname{bpy})_n(\operatorname{OPh})_{6-2n}]$ (n = 1 or 2).

Although the mechanism of the photooxidation of benzene is not fully understood at this moment, we propose that the coordinatively unsaturated Ru(II) species, $[Ru(bpy)_n]^{2+}$ (n = 1 or 2), promotes both the formation of OH radical from H₂O₂ and the attack of the OH radical to benzene as proposed for the Fenton reagent (Fig. 6) [8-15]. The reaction of $[\operatorname{Ru}(\operatorname{bpy})_n]^{2+}$ (n = 1 or 2) with $\operatorname{H}_2\operatorname{O}_2$ produces an OH radical and $[Ru(bpy)_n]^{3+}$, and the OH radical attacks benzene to form a hydroxycyclohexadienyl (C₆H₆OH) radical. The oxidation of hydroxycyclohexadienyl radical by $[Ru(bpy)_n]^{3+}$ results in the formation of phenol and regeneration of $[Ru(bpy)_n]^{2+}$. In the typical Fenton reagent system, substantial formation of biphenyl is observed, which results from coupling of the hydroxycyclohexadienyl radical. However, the coupling is minor in the present photocatalytic reaction by [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂/FSM-16 as shown in Table 1. Therefore, the reduction from the hydroxycyclohexadienyl radical to phenol is faster than the coupling to biphenyl. By comparing the catalytic results of Ru precursors having different numbers of bpy and Cl ligands (Table 1, Runs 1–3), the bpy ligand on the Ru center retards further oxidation of phenol to p-benzoquinone and polymeric compounds. Moreover, grafting of complexes on FSM-16 substantially enhanced the catalytic activity (Table 1, Runs 1 and 3 versus 5 and 6) over the non-grafted complexes. From these results, we propose that the hydroxycyclohexadienyl radical is located near the coordination sphere of $[Ru(bpy)_n]^{3+}$ in the mesopores of FSM-16, which



Fig. 5. Photosubstitution of bipyridine in the MC excitation of [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂.

Dark



Fig. 6. Proposed reaction mechanism for the photooxidation of benzene by [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂/FSM-16.

results in the facile reaction of the radical with the Ru(III) and the suppression of dimerization of the radical.

tion Program from the new energy and industrial technology development organization (NEDO) of Japan.

4. Conclusions

- [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ grafted on mesoporous FSM-16 catalytically oxidizes benzene to produce phenol in high activity and selectivity using H₂O₂ as an oxidant under UV–VIS irradiation.
- 2. Grafting of [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ on FSM-16 enhances the formation of phenol, possibly due to the site isolation of active Ru species.
- 3. Bipyridine ligands suppress the further oxidation of phenol.
- The MC excitation of [Ru(bpy)₃]Cl₂ in UV–VIS irradiation effectively increases the hydroxylation of benzene to phenol.
- 5. The MC excitation of $[Ru(bpy)_3]Cl_2$ results in the cleavage of Ru–N bonds to give coordinatively unsaturated $[Ru(bpy)_n]^{2+}$ (n = 1 or 2), which activates H_2O_2 to produce OH radical in the Fenton-type mechanism.

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