



Heterogeneous nucleation of ice on anthropogenic organic particles collected in Mexico City

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[1] This study reports on heterogeneous ice nucleation activity of predominantly organic (or coated with organic material) anthropogenic particles sampled within and around the polluted environment of Mexico City. The onset of heterogeneous ice nucleation was observed as a function of particle temperature (T_p), relative humidity (RH), nucleation mode, and particle chemical composition which is influenced by photochemical atmospheric aging. Particle analyses included computer controlled scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive analysis of X-rays (CCSEM/EDX) and scanning transmission X-ray microscopy with near edge X-ray absorption fine structure spectroscopy (STXM/NEXAFS). In contrast to most laboratory studies employing proxies of organic aerosol, we show that anthropogenic organic particles collected in Mexico City can potentially induce ice nucleation at experimental conditions relevant to cirrus formation. The results suggest a new precedent for the potential impact of organic particles on ice cloud formation and climate. **Citation:** Knopf, D. A., B. Wang, A. Laskin, R. C. Moffet, and M. K. Gilles (2010), Heterogeneous nucleation of ice on anthropogenic organic particles collected in Mexico City, *Geophys. Res. Lett.*, 37, L11803, doi:10.1029/2010GL043362.

1. Introduction

[2] The ability of aerosols to serve as heterogeneous ice nuclei (IN) for ice crystal formation is one of the least understood microphysical processes which are responsible for large uncertainties in climate modeling [Baker and Peter, 2008]. Heterogeneous ice nucleation occurs at warmer temperatures than homogeneous freezing of aqueous inorganic or organic droplets. Thus, IN have a higher propensity to form ice crystals and cirrus clouds. Heterogeneous ice nucleation proceeds by various modes: deposition (ice crystals nucleate from supersaturated water vapor on IN particles), immersion (ice crystals nucleate from supercooled aqueous droplets containing insoluble IN particles), or contact freezing (nucleation of ice crystals induced by collisions of supercooled droplets and IN particles). Cirrus clouds cover ~20% of the Earth's atmosphere and have a predominant warming effect on climate [Chen et al., 2000]. In mixed-phase clouds, IN may govern precipitation, which

affects the hydrological cycle. Although the significance of IN is acknowledged, most current climate models do not include processes leading to cloud formation via heterogeneous ice nucleation because they are poorly understood [Forster et al., 2007]. Previously, it was thought that insoluble inorganic particles such as mineral dust were the only relevant IN. Recent studies show that solid $(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{SO}_4$ particles may act as sufficient IN [Abbatt et al., 2006]. Upper troposphere data suggest that sulfate containing particles are frequently internally mixed with organic constituents [Murphy et al., 1998]. Field measurements in both urban and remote regions indicate that atmospheric aerosols contain a significant fraction of organic material, particularly in the anthropogenically influenced northern hemisphere [Zhang et al., 2007]. However, laboratory studies indicate that organic aerosol proxies are either very efficient (around 115% RH_{ice}) or, alternatively, very inefficient IN (close to homogeneous freezing). Limited laboratory experiments on the IN ability of crystalline organic particles [Kanji et al., 2008; Shilling et al., 2006] and soot surrogates [Mohler et al., 2005b] report sufficiently low relative humidity with respect to ice (RH_{ice}) onsets, similar to solid $(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{SO}_4$ particles. As discussed below, the vast majority of the laboratory studies indicate that carbonaceous particles (soot and organic particles) are inefficient IN under conditions relevant to cirrus formation. Hence, the role of organic material on atmospheric ice nucleation, and thus on cirrus cloud formation, remains elusive.

[3] In this study, we report heterogeneous ice nucleation activity of anthropogenic particles dominated by organics sampled within and around the polluted environment of Mexico City. In comparison to previous studies of urban anthropogenic IN [Braham and Spysersduran, 1974; Szyrmer and Zawadzki, 1997] we conducted detailed chemical particle analysis paired with ice nucleation experiments over a broad temperature range. We show that these anthropogenic particles can act as IN inducing ice formation at conditions relevant to cirrus formation.

2. Experiment

2.1. Particle Analyses

[4] Particle samples (0.3–2.5 μm in diameter) were collected at T0, T1, and T2 sampling sites during the MILAGRO 2006 campaign [Molina et al., 2007] for subsequent chemical analysis. T0 was inside of the Mexico City metropolitan area; T1 and T2 were northeast from the city, ~35 km and ~60 km, respectively. Particles were collected onto different substrates by a TRAC impactor [Laskin et al., 2006]. Two types of substrates were used: (a) TEM filmed grids for particle analyses using CCSEM/EDX and STXM/NEXAFS, and (b) Si_3N_4 coated silicon wafer chips for ice

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nucleation experiments. Samples from March 22, 2006, when the northeastern T0→T1→T2 airflow occurred, were chosen for detailed micro-spectroscopy particle analysis [Moffet *et al.*, 2010] and ice nucleation experiments summarized in Table 1.

2.2. Ice Nucleation Experiments

[5] Ice nucleation onsets were determined using an optical microscope (OM) coupled to an ice nucleation cell (1 mm in diameter, $<0.8 \text{ cm}^3$ in volume) allowing control of T_p and RH_{ice} [Dymarska *et al.*, 2006; Knopf and Lopez, 2009]. Particles deposited on silicon wafer substrates were exposed to humidified nitrogen (1 SLPM) at a constant dew point (T_d). The cooling rate, 0.1 K min^{-1} , is relevant to rates reported for mid- and low latitude cirrus clouds [Karcher and Strom, 2003]. RH_{ice} and RH_{H_2O} were derived from the water vapor pressures over water and ice [Murphy and Koop, 2005]: $RH_{ice} = p_{H_2O}(T_d)/p_{ice}(T_p)$, $RH_{H_2O} = p_{H_2O}(T_d)/p_{H_2O}(T_p)$. Values of T_p and RH_{ice} corresponding to ice nucleation events were determined at least 3 times for each sample. Subsequent to observed ice nucleation, particle samples were warmed above 273 K to ensure complete sublimation of ice prior to repeating the experiment. Measurement uncertainty was derived from the uncertainty of $\Delta T_d < (\pm 0.15 \text{ K})$ and of $\Delta T_p < (\pm 0.3 \text{ K})$ resulting in $\Delta RH_{ice} < \pm 10\%$ at 205 K and $\Delta RH_{ice} < \pm 3\%$ at 260 K. The OM technique allows observation of individual ice formation events, visual distinction between ice nucleation modes and water uptake. Water uptake can be detected if the particle size increases by $0.2 \mu\text{m}$ in diameter due to water adsorption. We report ice formation as deposition nucleation if no water uptake was observed prior to ice crystal formation.

3. Results and Discussion

[6] In the MILAGRO 2006 campaign, numerous aerosol characterization techniques indicated that secondary organic material was a major component of airborne particles [Molina *et al.*, 2007]. Figure S1a of the auxiliary material shows a typical SEM image of collected particles.¹ Significant organic material was associated with every particle measured. This was confirmed by CCSEM/EDX and STXM/NEXAFS micro-spectroscopy analyses of a statistically significant number of particles [Moffet *et al.*, 2010]. Figure S1b shows the particle-type compositions for samples collected at times and locations summarized in Table 1. Close to the source at T0, particles are described as various primary emissions, including dust and sulfate species, coated by secondary organics. As shown in Figure S1b, the particle-type composition at T0 did not change substantially during the day. Transport from T0 to T1 and T2 led to a significant increase in organic material which is attributed to the photochemical formation and processing of secondary organic aerosol [Doran *et al.*, 2007; Moffet *et al.*, 2010; Molina *et al.*, 2007].

[7] Figure 1a summarizes our ice nucleation results along with the previously reported data. The plot includes the ice nucleation onset of a blank substrate indicating the maximum RH_{ice} values achieved in our experiments. To verify the experimental method, the ice nucleation onset was first

Table 1. Location and Times of Particle Samples Used for Nucleation Studies^a

Sample Location	Local Time of Sampling	CCSEM/EDX, STXM/NEXAFS Particle Analyses	Ice Nucleation Experiments
T0	05:20 – 05:35		X
T0	05:35 – 05:50	X	
T0	10:35 – 10:50	X	
T0	12:20 – 12:35		X
T0	12:35 – 12:50	X	
T0	14:20 – 14:35		X
T1	08:35 – 08:50	X	
T1	13:00 – 13:15	X	
T1	13:45 – 14:00		X
T1	18:00 – 18:15	X	
T2	14:15 – 14:30		X
T2	14:30 – 14:45	X	
T2	19:30 – 19:45	X	

^aMILAGRO 2006 field campaign.

measured on kaolinite particles. Kaolinite dust is an efficient IN and induces ice formation at $RH_{ice} \sim 115\%$ for T_p in a range of 213–250 K [Bailey and Hallett, 2002; Dymarska *et al.*, 2006], conditions which were reproduced in our experiments. Red bars in Figure 1a shows deposition mode onsets of heterogeneous ice nucleation determined for particle samples collected at the T0 site during the time periods indicated in Table 1. Micro-spectroscopy analyses showed that these particles have thick organic coatings resulting from condensational growth of secondary organic material [Moffet *et al.*, 2010]. Particles take up water at $T_p > 230 \text{ K}$ and $\sim 83\% RH_{H_2O}$, and in some cases, demonstrate immersion mode freezing. Blue bars in Figure 1a represent heterogeneous ice nucleation onsets determined for particle samples from the T1 and T2 sites located downwind of the urban plume. At these two sites the number of entirely organic particles and extent of organic coating increased substantially [Moffet *et al.*, 2010]. Similar to T0 particles, deposition ice nucleation was observed at $T_p < 230 \text{ K}$. At higher temperatures water uptake and in some cases subsequent immersion freezing occurred. Initial water uptake on T1 and T2 particle samples also occurred at $\sim 83\% RH_{H_2O}$. Overall, ice nucleation onsets observed here are in stark contrast to previous ice nucleation reports applying laboratory proxies of organic particles [e.g., DeMott *et al.*, 1999, 2009; Petters *et al.*, 2009; Prenni *et al.*, 2001; Zobrist *et al.*, 2006].

[8] As shown in Figure 1a no significant difference in the measured ice nucleation onsets was observed between particles from different sites or time periods. This supports the premise that the outermost layers of organic material may control the IN propensity of the sampled particles, however, effects of inorganic material cannot be entirely ruled out. In contrast with laboratory studies [Mohler *et al.*, 2008], increasing organic material in the particles did not profoundly affect on the heterogeneous ice nucleation efficiency. This may be attributed to a very thick organic coating, such that deposition of any additional organic material has little impact on heterogeneous ice nucleation. Additional possibilities includes the formation of new IN coupled with the deactivation of IN within the urban plume [Szyrmer and Zawadzki, 1997] and particle coagulation. The insensitivity of heterogeneous ice nucleation on additional photochemical processing may facilitate the modeling of ice

¹Auxiliary materials are available in the HTML. doi:10.1029/2010GL043362.

cloud formation. This is in contrast to the assessment of particle optical properties which can change significantly due to atmospheric aging [Doran *et al.*, 2007].

[9] Figure 1b conveys heterogeneous ice nucleation onset data previously reported using laboratory proxies of organic particles. Most of which display heterogeneous ice nucleation properties substantially different than those reported here. Most literature data fall into two separate classes: very efficient IN which activate at $\sim 115\%$ RH_{ice} or inefficient IN that activate at $RH_{H_2O} > 90\%$. Neither of these indicates heterogeneous ice nucleation activities similar to those measured in particles from Mexico City. Only soot particles coated with multilayers of H_2SO_4 overlap significantly with the heterogeneous ice nucleation onsets reported here. However, laboratory proxies of coated soot particles exhibit different temperature dependences and nucleation modes (i.e., immersion) compared to the IN activity of particles collected in Mexico City. From our results, we conclude that current laboratory proxies of organic particles are not sufficiently representative to infer heterogeneous ice nucleation activity of anthropogenic organic material. While previous laboratory studies provide insights into the qualitative

influence of particle composition on IN properties and validation of nucleation theory, our data strongly suggest that parameterizations based solely on laboratory data for cloud and climate models may not accurately represent atmospheric cloud formation.

[10] In Figure 1 the onset conditions for cirrus formation reported for the Interhemispheric differences in cirrus properties from anthropogenic emissions (INCA) experiment for the northern and southern hemisphere, at mean temperatures of ~ 225 K, are indicated by sets of black and green dash-dotted horizontal lines, respectively [Haag *et al.*, 2003; Strom *et al.*, 2003]. A clear difference between two hemispheres has been reported in the ice formation onsets.

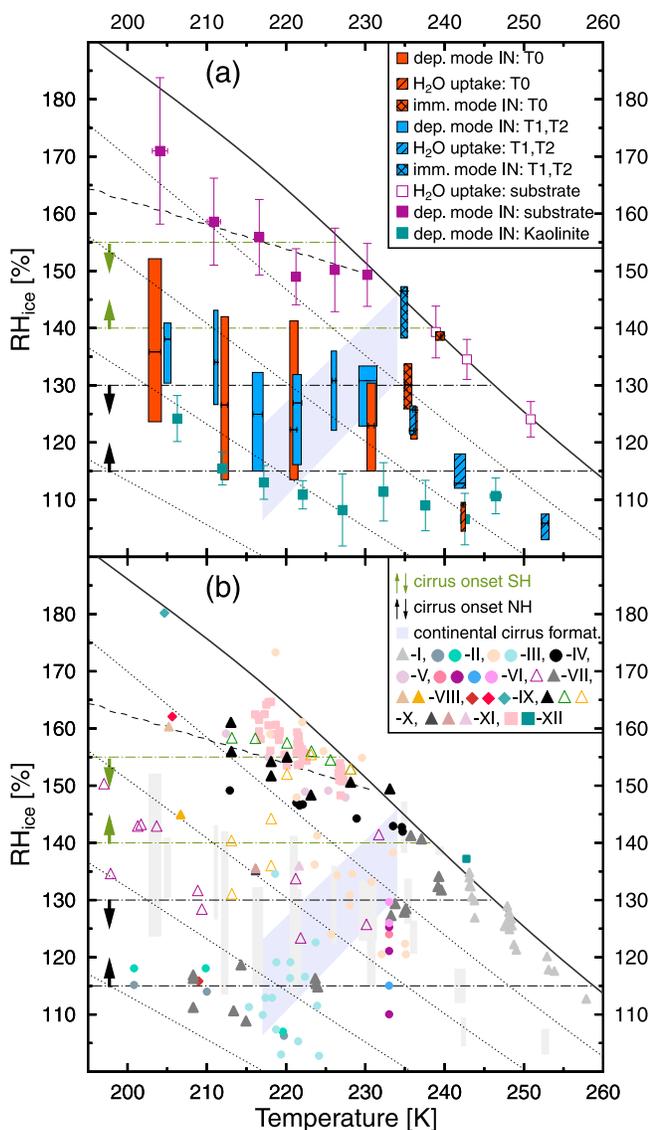


Figure 1. (a) Experimentally determined range of heterogeneous ice nucleation onsets of particles sampled in (red bars) and around (blue bars) Mexico City (Table 1) are shown. Corresponding shaded and hatched bars represent conditions at which water uptake and immersion mode freezing were observed, respectively. The horizontal solid lines within the bars indicate the median IN onset calculated from multiple observations. Water uptake and ice formation on blank substrates shown as open and filled purple boxes, respectively, indicate no substrate effect on the ice nucleation experiments. Heterogeneous ice nucleation onsets for kaolinite particles are shown as dark green solid squares. The solid black line indicates water saturation (100% RH_{H_2O}) and diagonal dotted lines indicate levels of 90, 80, 70, and 60% RH_{H_2O} from the top to the bottom left, respectively. The dashed line indicates the theoretical [Koop *et al.*, 2000] homogeneous freezing limit corresponding to a homogeneous ice nucleation rate coefficient of about $5 \cdot 10^9 \text{ cm}^{-3} \text{ s}^{-1}$. Light grey shaded area indicates bounds of continental cirrus formation [Heymsfield and Miloshevich, 1995]. The RH_{ice} ranges within the horizontal dash-dotted lines (emphasized by corresponding arrows) indicate the lower limits for cirrus formation conditions in northern (black) and southern hemisphere (green) [Strom *et al.*, 2003]. (b) Reported heterogeneous ice nucleation onsets for laboratory generated proxies of organic particles. Individual symbols listed in the figure correspond to IN experiments with following particles: I, soot aged by O_3 [Dymarska *et al.*, 2006]; II, maleic acid and mixed maleic acid-ammonium sulfate particles [Shilling *et al.*, 2006]; III, glutaric acid and mixed glutaric acid-ammonium sulfate particles [Baustian *et al.*, 2010]; IV, crystalline oxalic acid in aqueous solution [Zobrist *et al.*, 2006]; V, adipic acid [Prenni *et al.*, 2001]; VI, leonardite, oxalic acid, sodium humic acid, and octyl-silica [Kanji *et al.*, 2008]; VII, soot coated with sulfuric acid, and uncoated soot particles [Mohler *et al.*, 2005b]; VIII, soot containing different amounts of sulfur [Mohler *et al.*, 2005a]; IX, Arizona test dust coated by secondary organic aerosol (SOA), illite coated by SOA, pure SOA [Mohler *et al.*, 2008]; X, soot, soot coated with a monolayer, and multiple layers of sulfuric acid [DeMott *et al.*, 1999]; XI, three different types of oxidized soot surrogates [Koehler *et al.*, 2009]; XII, biomass burning particles from two different studies [DeMott *et al.*, 2009; Petters *et al.*, 2009]. Studies II, III, IV, and VI employed particles up to $10 \mu\text{m}$ in diameter. Ice nucleation data of this study are indicated as light grey bars for comparison. All other lines are the same as in Figure 1a.

Light grey shaded region indicates continental cirrus formation [Heymsfield and Miloshevich, 1995]. Surprisingly, the heterogeneous ice nucleation onsets reported here coincide well with cirrus cloud onset conditions typical for the northern hemisphere, i.e., $RH_{ice} > 115\%$ at temperatures of 205–235 K. Analysis of the INCA data concluded that the northern hemisphere cirrus conditions are controlled by homogeneous and selective heterogeneous freezing whereas ice crystals are formed predominantly by homogeneous ice nucleation in the cleaner southern hemisphere [Haag et al., 2003]. Our data suggests that anthropogenic particles from the urban environment of Mexico City can act as IN under the observed conditions.

[11] Using 2-D projection areas of individual particles, CCSEM/EDX analysis allows an estimation of particle surface area (Table S1). Assuming the surface area of a hemisphere, the upper limit for the heterogeneous ice nucleation rate coefficient of $\sim 200 \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$ is for 205–230 K. Considering particle surface concentrations of $\sim 200 \mu\text{m}^2 \text{ cm}^{-3}$ at 2 km altitude above Mexico City [Lewandowski et al., 2010], ice particle production rates are $\sim 4 \cdot 10^{-4} \text{ s}^{-1}$ for one cm^3 of air. Hence, under these ambient conditions 24 ice crystals per liter of air can form per minute. This production rate is consistent with typically cirrus ice crystal concentrations [Lynch et al., 2002]. Atmospheric ice crystal numbers can be estimated from the average activated particle fraction, i.e., number of observed IN to total particle number on the substrate, which was approximately 0.002%. Assuming typical free tropospheric aerosol concentrations of $3 \cdot 10^5$ particles per liter of air, this would produce ~ 6 ice crystals per liter of air, also consistent with observed cirrus ice crystal concentrations [Lynch et al., 2002]. Further details are provided in the auxiliary material.

[12] Water uptake at $\sim 83\% RH_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}$ was observed for particles sampled at all locations and times on March 22, 2006 and $T_p > 235 \text{ K}$. Laboratory experiments suggest that aerosol particles consisting of multiple miscible organic species and inorganic salts such as $(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{SO}_4$ possess much lower deliquescence relative humidity (DRH) [Marcolli et al., 2004] compared to the corresponding DRH values of the individual species. However, DRH for organic particle proxies such as malonic acid change by about 30% $RH_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}$ over a temperature range of 50 K [Braban et al., 2003]. This fact and the presence of sulfates on the sampling day could account for higher DRH values observed at low temperatures in our experiments. Uptake of water at these low $RH_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}$ conditions could trigger ice nucleation via immersion freezing.

4. Summary and Conclusions

[13] We have shown that optical ice nucleation measurements on particle samples collected in field studies and characterized using micro-spectroscopy analyses provide a practical and insightful tool to infer their IN properties. The results presented here indicate that anthropogenic particles dominated by organics can act as sufficient IN under conditions relevant for cirrus cloud formation in contrast to most laboratory studies employing proxies of organic particles. A wide range of field studies indicate that particles containing organics are ubiquitous throughout the troposphere. Our findings are of particular importance given the rapid growth of large cities and increasing urban emissions

to the Earth's atmosphere. The results presented in this work call for a re-evaluation of the particle types employed in laboratory experiments on heterogeneous ice nucleation and corresponding parameterizations. Cloud and climate modeling studies may need to consider particles dominated by organic material as potential IN involved in cirrus cloud formation.

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