

Author Response for “Aqueous SOA formation from the direct photosensitized oxidation of vanillin in the absence and presence of ammonium nitrate” by Mabato et al.

Comments to the author: Dear authors, Thank you for addressing and clarifying the remaining questions of the reviewers. The revised manuscript has been largely improved and clearer. I have one more question, was O₃ involved in the reactions or it had been excluded by the use of ozone free xenon lamp.

Response: We thank the editor for the positive comments. As the lamp was situated outside the reactor in our experiments, ozone generating or ozone free lamp will not affect the reactions. We have clarified that ozone is not involved in the reactions as follows (additional text in red):

Lines 104-114: The solutions were bubbled with synthetic air or nitrogen (N₂) (> 99.995%) (0.5 dm³/min) for 30 min before irradiation to achieve air- or N₂-saturated conditions, respectively, and the bubbling was continued throughout the reactions (Du et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2020). The aim of the air-saturated experiments was to enable the generation of secondary oxidants (¹O₂, O₂^{•-}/[•]HO₂, [•]OH) from ³VL* as O₂ is present. Conversely, the N₂-saturated experiments would inhibit the formation of these secondary oxidants, which can lead to ³VL*-driven reactions (Chen et al., 2020). Comparison of results of air and N₂-saturated experiments can yield information on the reaction pathways that require O₂ involved in the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL. **In this study, the reactions can generate ³VL* and secondary oxidants (¹O₂, O₂^{•-}/[•]HO₂, [•]OH) but not ozone; hence we focused on reactions involving the former.** Solutions were irradiated through the quartz window of the reactor using a xenon lamp (model 6258, Ozone free xenon lamp, 300 W, Newport) equipped with a longpass filter (20CGA-305 nm cut-on filter, Newport) to eliminate light below 300 nm.

1 **Aqueous SOA formation from the direct photosensitized oxidation of** 2 **vanillin in the absence and presence of ammonium nitrate**

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13 **Abstract.** Vanillin (VL), a phenolic aromatic carbonyl abundant in biomass burning emissions, forms triplet excited states
14 (³VL*) under simulated sunlight leading to aqueous secondary organic aerosol (aqSOA) formation. Nitrate and ammonium
15 are among the main components of biomass burning aerosols and cloud/fog water. Under atmospherically relevant cloud and
16 fog conditions, solutions composed of either VL only or VL with ammonium nitrate were subjected to simulated sunlight
17 irradiation to compare aqSOA formation via the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in the absence and presence of
18 ammonium nitrate. The reactions were characterized by examining the VL decay kinetics, product compositions, and light
19 absorbance changes. Both conditions generated oligomers, functionalized monomers, and oxygenated ring-opening products,
20 and ammonium nitrate promoted functionalization and nitration, likely due to its photolysis products ([•]OH, [•]NO₂, and NO₂⁻ or
21 HONO). Moreover, a potential imidazole derivative observed in the presence of ammonium nitrate suggested that ammonium
22 participated in the reactions. The majority of the most abundant products from both conditions were potential Brown carbon
23 (BrC) chromophores. The effects of oxygen (O₂), pH, and reactants concentration and molar ratios on the reactions were also
24 explored. Our findings show that O₂ plays an essential role in the reactions, and oligomer formation was enhanced at pH < 4.
25 Also, functionalization was dominant at low VL concentration, whereas oligomerization was favored at high VL concentration.
26 Furthermore, oligomers and hydroxylated products were detected from the oxidation of guaiacol (a non-carbonyl phenol) via
27 VL photosensitized reactions. Lastly, potential aqSOA formation pathways via the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in
28 the absence and presence of ammonium nitrate were proposed. This study indicates that the direct photosensitized oxidation
29 of VL may be an important aqSOA source in areas influenced by biomass burning and underscores the importance of nitrate
30 in the aqueous-phase processing of aromatic carbonyls.

31 **1 Introduction**

32 Aqueous reactions can be an important source of secondary organic aerosols (SOA) (Blando and Turpin, 2000; Volkamer et
33 al., 2009; Lim et al., 2010; Ervens et al., 2011; Huang et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2014) such as highly-
34 oxygenated and low-volatility organics (Hoffmann et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2019) which may affect aerosol optical properties
35 due to contributions to Brown Carbon (BrC) (Gilardoni et al., 2016). BrC refers to organic aerosols that absorb radiation
36 efficiently in the near-ultraviolet (UV) and visible regions (Laskin et al., 2015). The formation of aqueous SOA (aqSOA) via
37 photochemical reactions involves oxidation, with hydroxyl radical ($\cdot\text{OH}$) usually considered as the primary oxidant (Herrmann
38 et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2014). The significance of photosensitized chemistry in atmospheric aerosols has recently been
39 reviewed (George et al., 2015). For instance, triplet excited states of organic compounds ($^3\text{C}^*$) from the irradiation of light-
40 absorbing organics such as non-phenolic aromatic carbonyls (Canonica et al., 1995; Anastasio et al., 1997; Vione et al., 2006;
41 Smith et al., 2014) have been reported to oxidize phenols at higher rates and with greater aqSOA yields compared to $\cdot\text{OH}$ (Sun
42 et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2014; Yu et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2016). Aside from being an oxidant, $^3\text{C}^*$ can also be a precursor
43 of singlet oxygen ($^1\text{O}_2$), superoxide ($\text{O}_2^{\cdot-}$) or hydroperoxyl ($\cdot\text{HO}_2$) radical, and $\cdot\text{OH}$ (via $\text{HO}_2^{\cdot}/\text{O}_2^{\cdot-}$ formation) upon reactions
44 with O_2 and substrates (e.g., phenols) (George et al., 2018). The $^3\text{C}^*$ concentration in typical fog water has been estimated to
45 be > 25 times than that of $\cdot\text{OH}$, making $^3\text{C}^*$ the primary photo-oxidant for biomass burning phenolic compounds (Kaur and
46 Anastasio, 2018; Kaur et al., 2019). Recent works on triplet-driven oxidation of phenols have mainly focused on changes of
47 physicochemical properties (e.g., light absorption) and aqSOA yield (e.g., Smith et al., 2014, 2015, 2016), with few reports on
48 reaction pathways and products (e.g., Yu et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2021).

49 Inorganic salts such as ammonium nitrate are major components of aerosols and cloud/fog water. In cloud and fog
50 water, the concentrations of inorganic nitrate can vary from $50 \mu\text{M}$ to $> 1000 \mu\text{M}$, with higher levels typically noted under
51 polluted conditions (Munger et al., 1983; Collett et al., 1998; Zhang and Anastasio, 2003; Li et al., 2011; Giulianelli et al.,
52 2014; Bianco et al., 2020). Upon photolysis (Vione et al., 2006; Herrmann, 2007; Scharko et al., 2014), inorganic nitrate in
53 cloud and fog water can contribute to BrC (Minero et al., 2007) and aqSOA formation (Huang et al., 2018; Klodt et al., 2019;
54 Zhang et al., 2021) by generating $\cdot\text{OH}$ and nitrating agents (e.g., $\cdot\text{NO}_2$). For example, the aqSOA yields from the photo-
55 oxidation of phenolic carbonyls in ammonium nitrate are twice as high as that in ammonium sulfate solution (Huang et al.,
56 2018). Nitration is a significant process in the formation of light-absorbing organics or BrC in the atmosphere (Jacobson, 1999;
57 Kahnt et al., 2013; Mohr et al., 2013; Laskin et al., 2015; Teich et al., 2017; Li et al., 2020). Moreover, nitrate photolysis has
58 been proposed to be a potentially important process for SO_2 oxidation and SOA formation via the generation of $\cdot\text{OH}$, $\cdot\text{NO}_2$,
59 and N(III) within particles (Gen et al., 2019a, 2019b; Zhang et al., 2020, 2021), and it can also potentially change the
60 morphology of atmospheric viscous particles (Liang et al., 2021). Furthermore, ammonium (NH_4^+) can react with carbonyls
61 producing light-absorbing compounds and highly oxygenated oligomers, as well as catalyze different reactions (De Haan et
62 al., 2009, 2011; Nozière et al., 2009, 2010, 2018; Shapiro et al., 2009; Yu et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2013; Powelson et al., 2014;
63 Gen et al., 2018; Mabato et al., 2019). Therefore, $^3\text{C}^*$ and inorganic nitrate can contribute to aqSOA and BrC formation.

64 Biomass burning (BB) is a significant atmospheric source of both phenolic and non-phenolic aromatic carbonyls
65 (Rogge et al., 1998; Nolte et al., 2001; Schauer et al., 2001; Bond et al., 2004). Upon exposure to sunlight, aromatic carbonyls
66 are excited to their triplet excited states, which can initiate oxidation leading to aqSOA formation (e.g., Smith et al., 2014;
67 2015, 2016). An example is vanillin (VL) (Henry's law constant of $4.56 \times 10^5 \text{ M atm}^{-1}$; Yaws, 1994), a phenolic aromatic
68 carbonyl that has been used as a model compound for methoxyphenols, which are abundant in BB emissions (Li et al., 2014;
69 Pang et al., 2019a). The aqueous $\cdot\text{OH}$ oxidation and direct photodegradation of VL have been shown to yield low-volatility
70 products, although these findings were based on 254-nm irradiation (Li et al., 2014). Photodegradation kinetics and aqSOA
71 yields have been reported for direct VL photodegradation under simulated sunlight (Smith et al., 2016), with oxygenated
72 aliphatic-like compounds (high H:C, ≥ 1.5 and low O:C, ≤ 0.5 ratios) noted as the most likely products (Loisel et al., 2021).
73 Additionally, aqueous-phase reactions of phenols with reactive nitrogen species have been proposed to be a significant source
74 of nitrophenols and SOA (Grosjean, 1985; Kitanovski et al., 2014; Kroflič et al., 2015, 2021; Pang et al., 2019a; Yang et al.,
75 2021). For instance, nitrite-mediated VL photo-oxidation can generate nitrophenols, and the reactions are influenced by
76 nitrite/VL molar ratios, pH, and the presence of $\cdot\text{OH}$ scavengers (Pang et al., 2019a). Nitrate and ammonium are also among
77 the main biomass burning aerosol components (Xiao et al., 2020; Zielinski et al., 2020). As BB aerosols are typically internally
78 mixed with other aerosol components (Zielinski et al., 2020), VL may coexist with ammonium nitrate in BB aerosols. The
79 direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in the absence and presence of ammonium nitrate may then reveal insights into the
80 atmospheric processing of BB aerosols. Moreover, the $^3\text{C}^*$ of non-phenolic aromatic carbonyls (e.g., 3,4-
81 dimethoxybenzaldehyde, DMB; a non-phenolic aromatic carbonyl) (Smith et al., 2014; Yu et al., 2014; Jiang et al., 2021) and
82 phenolic aromatic carbonyls (e.g., acetosyringone, vanillin) (Smith et al., 2016) have been shown to oxidize phenols, but the
83 reaction products from the latter are unknown.

84 Previous works on aqSOA formation via triplet-mediated oxidation are mostly based on reactions between phenols
85 and a non-phenolic aromatic carbonyl as triplet precursor (e.g., Smith et al., 2014; Yu et al., 2014; Jiang et al., 2021). Also,
86 studies examining the effects of inorganic nitrate on aqSOA formation and properties remain limited. The present study aimed
87 to evaluate aqSOA formation via the direct photosensitized oxidation of a triplet precursor (VL) alone. Furthermore, aqSOA
88 formation via the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in the presence of ammonium nitrate was also examined. Accordingly,
89 the main goals of this study are (1) to compare aqSOA formation in cloud/fog water via the direct photosensitized oxidation
90 of VL in the absence and presence of ammonium nitrate, (2) to evaluate the influences of O_2 , solution pH, and reactants
91 concentration and molar ratios on the reactions, (3) to investigate the participation of ammonium in the direct photosensitized
92 oxidation of VL in the presence of ammonium nitrate, and (4) to examine aqSOA formation from the oxidation of guaiacol, a
93 non-carbonyl phenol, via photosensitized reactions of VL. To achieve these goals, solutions composed of either VL only or
94 VL in the presence of ammonium nitrate were subjected to simulated sunlight irradiation under atmospherically relevant cloud
95 and fog conditions. Solutions composed of VL in the presence of sodium nitrate were also examined for comparison with the
96 presence of ammonium nitrate. The reactions were characterized based on VL decay kinetics, detected products, and light
97 absorbance changes. Finally, we proposed aqSOA formation pathways via the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in the

98 absence and presence of ammonium nitrate. This work presents a comprehensive comparison of aqSOA formation from the
99 direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in the absence and presence of ammonium nitrate.

100

101 2 Methods

102 2.1 Aqueous-phase photo-oxidation experiments

103 Photo-oxidation experiments were performed in a custom-built quartz photoreactor. The solutions (initial volume of 500 mL)
104 were continuously mixed throughout the experiments using a magnetic stirrer. The solutions were bubbled with synthetic air
105 or nitrogen (N₂) (> 99.995%) (0.5 dm³/min) for 30 min before irradiation to achieve air- or N₂-saturated conditions,
106 respectively, and the bubbling was continued throughout the reactions (Du et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2020). The aim of the air-
107 saturated experiments was to enable the generation of secondary oxidants (¹O₂, O₂^{•-}/[•]HO₂, [•]OH) from ³VL* as O₂ is present.
108 Conversely, the N₂-saturated experiments would inhibit the formation of these secondary oxidants, which can lead to ³VL*-
109 driven reactions (Chen et al., 2020). Comparison of results of air and N₂-saturated experiments can yield information on the
110 reaction pathways that require O₂ involved in the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL. In this study, the reactions can
111 generate ³VL* and secondary oxidants (¹O₂, O₂^{•-}/[•]HO₂, [•]OH) but not ozone; hence we focused on reactions involving the
112 former. Solutions were irradiated through the quartz window of the reactor using a xenon lamp (model 6258, Ozone free xenon
113 lamp, 300 W, Newport) equipped with a longpass filter (20CGA-305 nm cut-on filter, Newport) to eliminate light below 300
114 nm. Cooling fans positioned around the photoreactor and lamp housing maintained reaction temperatures at 27 ± 2 °C. The
115 averaged initial photon flux in the reactor from 300 to 380 nm measured using a chemical actinometer (2-nitrobenzaldehyde)
116 was 2.6 × 10¹⁵ photons cm⁻² s⁻¹ nm⁻¹ (Fig. S1). Although the concentration of VL in cloud/fog water has been estimated to be
117 < 0.01 mM (Anastasio et al., 1997), a higher VL concentration (0.1 mM) was used in this study to guarantee sufficient signals
118 for product identification (Vione et al., 2019). The chosen ammonium nitrate (AN) or sodium nitrate (SN) concentration (1
119 mM) was based on values observed in cloud and fog water (Munger et al., 1983; Collett et al., 1998; Zhang and Anastasio,
120 2003; Li et al., 2011; Giulianelli et al., 2014; Bianco et al., 2020). It should be noted that this study is not intended to identify
121 the concentrations of ammonium nitrate that would affect the kinetics but to examine the effect of ammonium nitrate on aqSOA
122 formation from the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL. Moreover, the photo-oxidation of guaiacol (GUA) (0.1 mM), a
123 non-carbonyl phenol, in the presence of VL (0.1 mM) was studied. The GUA experiments allowed us to examine aqSOA
124 formation from the oxidation of phenols by ³VL*. Samples (10 mL) were collected hourly for a total of 6 h for offline chemical
125 and optical analyses. VL (and GUA) decay kinetics measurements (calibration curves for VL and GUA standard solutions;
126 Fig. S2), product characterization, small organic acids measurements, and absorbance measurements were conducted using
127 ultra-high-performance liquid chromatography with photodiode array detector (UHPLC-PDA), UHPLC coupled with
128 quadrupole time-of-flight mass spectrometry (UHPLC-qToF-MS) equipped with an electrospray ionization (ESI) source and
129 operated in the positive ion mode (the negative ion mode signals were too low for our analyses), ion chromatography (IC), and
130 UV-Vis spectrophotometry, respectively. Each experiment was repeated independently at least three times and measurements

131 were done in triplicate. The reported decay rate constants and absorbance enhancement are the average of results from triplicate
132 experiments, and the corresponding errors represent one standard deviation. The mass spectra are based on the average of
133 results from duplicate experiments. The Supporting Information (Text S1 to S6) provides details on the materials and analytical
134 procedures. The pseudo-first-order rate constant (k') for VL decay was determined using the following equation (Huang et al.,
135 2018):

$$\ln ([\text{VL}]_t/[\text{VL}]_0) = -k't \quad (\text{Eq. 1})$$

136
137
138
139 where $[\text{VL}]_t$ and $[\text{VL}]_0$ are the concentrations of VL at time t and 0, respectively. Replacing VL with GUA in Eq. 1 enabled
140 the calculation of GUA decay rate constant. The decay rate constants were normalized to the photon flux measured for each
141 experiment through dividing k' by the measured 2-nitrobenzaldehyde (2NB) decay rate constant, $j(2\text{NB})$ (see Text S6 for more
142 details).

143 2.2 Calculation of normalized abundance of products

144 Comparisons of peak abundance in mass spectrometry have been used in many recent studies (e.g., Lee et al., 2014;
145 Romonosky et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2017; Fleming et al., 2018; Song et al., 2018; Klodt et al., 2019; Ning et al., 2019) to
146 show the relative importance of different types of compounds (Wang et al., 2021). However, ionization efficiency may greatly
147 vary for different classes of compounds (Kearle, 2000; Schmidt et al., 2006; Leito et al., 2008; Perry et al., 2008; Krueve et
148 al., 2014), and so uncertainties may arise from comparisons of peak areas among compounds. In this work, we assumed equal
149 ionization efficiency of different compounds, which is commonly used to estimate O:C ratios of SOA (e.g., Bateman et al.,
150 2012; Lin et al., 2012; Laskin et al., 2014; De Haan et al., 2019), to calculate their normalized abundance. The normalized
151 abundance of a product, $[\text{P}]$ (unitless), was calculated as follows:

$$[\text{P}] = \frac{A_{P,t}}{A_{VL,t}} \cdot \frac{[\text{VL}]_t}{[\text{VL}]_0} \quad (\text{Eq. 2})$$

152
153
154 where $A_{P,t}$ and $A_{VL,t}$ are the extracted ion chromatogram (EIC) peak areas of the product P and VL from UHPLC-qToF-MS
155 analyses at time t , respectively; $[\text{VL}]_t$ and $[\text{VL}]_0$ are the VL concentrations (μM) determined using UHPLC-PDA at time t and
156 0, respectively. Here, we relied on the direct quantification of $[\text{VL}]$ using UHPLC-PDA (see Fig. S2 for VL calibration curve).
157 We emphasize that the normalized abundance of products in this study is a semi-quantitative analysis intended to provide an
158 overview of how the signal intensities changed under different experimental conditions but not to quantify the absolute
159 concentration of products. Also, as it is based on comparisons of peak abundance from UHPLC-qToF-MS analyses, the
160 normalized abundance of products in this study is associated with intrinsic uncertainties due to the variability in ionization
161 efficiencies for various compounds. Moreover, the major products detected in this study are probably those with high
162 concentration or high ionization efficiency in the positive ESI mode. The use of relative abundance (product peaks are

163 normalized to the highest peak) (e.g., Lee et al., 2014; Romonosky et al., 2017; Fleming et al., 2018; Klodt et al., 2019) would
164 yield the same major products reported. Typical fragmentation behavior observed in MS/MS spectra for individual functional
165 groups from Holčapek et al. (2010) are outlined in Table S1.

166 **3 Results and Discussion**

167 **3.1 Kinetics, mass spectrometric, and absorbance changes analyses during the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL** 168 **in the aqueous phase**

169 For clarity purposes, the reactions involving reactive species referred to in the following discussions are provided in Table 1.
170 Table 2 summarizes the reaction conditions, initial VL (and GUA) decay rate constants, normalized abundance of products,
171 and average carbon oxidation state ($\langle OS_c \rangle$) (of the 50 most abundant products). In general, the 50 most abundant products
172 contributed more than half of the total normalized abundance of products and can serve as representative products for
173 discussions of reaction pathways and calculation of the $\langle OS_c \rangle$.

174 As shown in Figure S3, VL underwent oxidation both directly and in the presence of ammonium (and sodium) nitrate
175 upon simulated sunlight illumination. VL absorbs light and is promoted to its excited singlet state ($^1VL^*$), then undergoes
176 intersystem crossing (ISC) to the excited triplet state, $^3VL^*$. In principle, $^3VL^*$ can oxidize ground-state VL (Type I
177 photosensitized reactions) via H-atom abstraction/electron transfer and form $O_2^{\cdot-}$ or HO_2^{\cdot} in the presence of O_2 (George et al.,
178 2018), or react with O_2 (Type II photosensitized reactions) to yield 1O_2 via energy transfer or $O_2^{\cdot-}$ via electron transfer (Lee et
179 al., 1987; Foote et al., 1991). The disproportionation of $HO_2^{\cdot}/O_2^{\cdot-}$ (Anastasio et al., 1997) form hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2),
180 which is a photolytic source of $\cdot OH$. Overall, air-saturated conditions, in which O_2 is present, enable the generation of
181 secondary oxidants (1O_2 , $O_2^{\cdot-}/HO_2^{\cdot}$, $\cdot OH$) from $^3VL^*$. Moreover, $\cdot OH$, $\cdot NO_2$, and NO_2^-/HNO_2 , i.e., N(III), generated via nitrate
182 photolysis (Reactions 1–3; Table 1), can also oxidize or nitrate VL. In this work, the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in
183 the absence (VL only experiments) and presence of ammonium nitrate are referred to as VL^* and VL+AN, respectively.

184 **3.1.1 VL photo-oxidation under N_2 and air-saturated conditions**

185 As previously stated, the N_2 -saturated experiments would inhibit the formation of secondary oxidants (1O_2 , $O_2^{\cdot-}/HO_2^{\cdot}$, $\cdot OH$)
186 from $^3VL^*$, facilitating $^3VL^*$ -driven reactions (Chen et al., 2020). In contrast, the air-saturated experiments can enable the
187 generation of these secondary oxidants from $^3VL^*$ as O_2 is present. Moreover, for experiments conducted under three saturated
188 gases (air, O_2 , and N_2), the rate constant for 4-ethylguaiacol (a non-carbonyl phenol) loss by $^3DMB^*$ decreased in the order of
189 air > N_2 > O_2 . This was attributed to the presence of O_2 , resulting in a synergistic effect of 1O_2 and $^3C^*$ under air-saturated
190 conditions (Chen et al., 2020). The differences in air and N_2 -saturated experiments can then be used to infer the role of reaction
191 pathways that require O_2 in the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL. The photosensitized oxidation of VL under both N_2 -
192 and air-saturated conditions (Fig. S3a) were carried out at pH 4, which is representative of moderately acidic aerosol and cloud
193 pH values (Pye et al., 2020). No significant VL loss was observed for dark experiments. The oxidation of ground-state VL by

194 $^3\text{VL}^*$ via H-atom abstraction or electron transfer can form phenoxy (which is in resonance with a carbon-centered
195 cyclohexadienyl radical that has a longer lifetime) and ketyl radicals (Neumann et al., 1986a, 1986b; Anastasio et al., 1997).
196 The coupling of phenoxy radicals or phenoxy and cyclohexadienyl radicals can form oligomers as observed for both N_2 - and
197 air-saturated experiments (see discussions later). However, the minimal decay of VL under N_2 -saturated condition indicates
198 that these radicals probably decayed via back-hydrogen transfer to regenerate VL (Lathioor et al., 1999). A possible
199 explanation for this is the involvement of O_2 in the secondary steps of VL decay. For instance, a major fate of the ketyl radical
200 is reaction with O_2 (Anastasio et al., 1997). In the absence of O_2 , radical formation occurs, but the forward reaction of ketyl
201 radical and O_2 is blocked, leading to the regeneration of VL as suggested by the minimal VL decay. Aside from potential
202 inhibition of secondary oxidants generation (Chen et al., 2020), N_2 purging may have also hindered the secondary steps for
203 VL decay.

204 Contrastingly, the VL decay rate constant for VL^* under air-saturated conditions was 4 times higher than under N_2 -
205 saturated conditions (Table 2). As mentioned earlier, secondary oxidants ($^1\text{O}_2$, $\text{O}_2^{\cdot-}/\text{HO}_2$, $^{\cdot}\text{OH}$) can be generated from $^3\text{VL}^*$
206 when O_2 is present (under air-saturated conditions). However, the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in this study is likely
207 governed by $^3\text{VL}^*$ and that these secondary oxidants have only minor participation. $^1\text{O}_2$ is also a potential oxidant for phenols
208 (Herrmann et al., 2010; Minella et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2014), but $^1\text{O}_2$ reacts much faster (by ~60 times) with phenolate ions
209 than neutral phenols (Tratnyek and Hoigne, 1991; Canonica et al., 1995; McNally et al., 2005). Under the pH values (pH 2.5
210 to 4) considered in this study, the amount of phenolate ion is negligible ($\text{p}K_a$ of VL = 7.9), so the reaction between VL and $^1\text{O}_2$
211 should be slow. Interestingly, however, both $^3\text{C}^*$ and $^1\text{O}_2$ have been shown to be important in the photo-oxidation of 4-
212 ethylguaiacol ($\text{p}K_a = 10.3$) by $^3\text{DMB}^*$ (solution with pH of ~3) (Chen et al., 2020). Furthermore, while the irradiation of other
213 phenolic compounds can produce H_2O_2 , a precursor for $^{\cdot}\text{OH}$ (Anastasio et al., 1997), the amount of H_2O_2 is small. Based on
214 this, only trace amounts of H_2O_2 were likely generated from VL^* (Li et al., 2014) under-air saturated conditions, suggesting
215 that contribution from $^{\cdot}\text{OH}$ was minor. Overall, these suggest that the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in this study is
216 mainly driven by $^3\text{VL}^*$.

217 The VL decay rate constant for VL+AN under air-saturated conditions was also higher (6.6 times) than under N_2 -
218 saturated conditions, possibly due to reactions facilitated by nitrate photolysis products that may have been enhanced in the
219 presence of O_2 (Vione et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2014; Pang et al., 2019a). As shown later, more N-containing species were
220 observed for VL+AN under air-saturated conditions than under N_2 -saturated conditions. An example is enhanced VL nitration
221 likely from increased $^{\cdot}\text{NO}_2$ formation such as from the reaction of $^{\cdot}\text{OH}$ and $\text{O}_2^{\cdot-}$ with NO_2^- (Reactions 4 and 5, respectively;
222 Table 1) or the autoxidation of $^{\cdot}\text{NO}$ from NO_2^- photolysis (Reactions 6–9; Table 1) in aqueous solutions (Pang et al., 2019a).
223 Nevertheless, the comparable decay rate constants for VL^* and VL+AN imply that $^3\text{VL}^*$ chemistry still dominates even at
224 1:10 molar ratio of VL/AN. This can be attributed to the much higher molar absorptivity of VL compared to that of nitrate
225 (Fig. S1) and the high VL concentration (0.1 mM) used in this study. The quantification of the oxidants in our reaction systems
226 is not explored here and require additional work. In essence, the N_2 -saturated experiments suggest that the secondary steps for

227 VL decay via $^3\text{VL}^*$ may require to O_2 proceed. Nonetheless, further study on the impact of O_2 on the reactive intermediates
228 involved is required to understand the exact mechanisms occurring under air-saturated conditions.

229 The products from VL^* under N_2 -saturated conditions were mainly oligomers (e.g., $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{14}\text{O}_4$) (Fig. 1a), consistent
230 with triplet-mediated oxidation forming higher molecular weight products, with less fragmentation relative to oxidation by
231 $\cdot\text{OH}$ (Yu et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2020). A threefold increase in the normalized abundance of products was noted upon addition
232 of AN ($\text{VL}+\text{AN}$ under N_2 -saturated conditions; Fig. 1b), and in addition to oligomers, functionalized monomers (e.g., $\text{C}_8\text{H}_6\text{O}_5$)
233 and N-containing compounds (e.g., $\text{C}_8\text{H}_9\text{NO}_3$; No. 3, Table S2) were also observed, in agreement with $\cdot\text{OH}$ -initiated oxidation
234 yielding more functionalized/oxygenated products compared to triplet-mediated oxidation (Yu et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2020).
235 Oligomers, functionalized monomers (e.g., demethylated VL; Fig. S4), and N-containing compounds (e.g., $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{10}\text{N}_2\text{O}_9$; No.
236 4, Table S2) (for $\text{VL}+\text{AN}$) had higher normalized abundance under air-saturated conditions (Figs. 1c-d), attributable to efficient
237 $^3\text{VL}^*$ -initiated oxidation and enhanced VL nitration in the presence of O_2 . For both VL^* and $\text{VL}+\text{AN}$ under air-saturated
238 conditions, the most abundant product was $\text{C}_{10}\text{H}_{10}\text{O}_5$ (No. 5, Table S2), a substituted VL. Irradiation of VL by 254-nm lamp
239 has also been reported to lead to VL dimerization and functionalization via ring-retaining pathways, as well as small oxygenates
240 formation but only when $\cdot\text{OH}$ from H_2O_2 were involved (Li et al., 2014). In this work, small organic acids (e.g., formic acid)
241 were observed from both VL^* and $\text{VL}+\text{AN}$ under air-saturated conditions (Fig. S5) due to simulated sunlight that could access
242 the 308-nm VL band (Smith et al., 2016). Interestingly, we observed a potential imidazole derivative ($\text{C}_5\text{H}_5\text{N}_3\text{O}_2$; No. 6, Table
243 S2) from $\text{VL}+\text{AN}$ under air-saturated conditions (Fig. 1d), which may have formed from reactions induced by ammonium.
244 This compound was not observed in a parallel experiment in which AN was replaced with SN (Fig. S6a; see Sect. 3.1.3 for
245 discussion).

246 The potential aqSOA formation pathways via the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in the absence and presence
247 of AN in this study are summarized in Fig. 2. At pH 4, $^3\text{VL}^*$ -initiated reactions yielded oligomeric species such as $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{12}\text{O}_6$
248 and $\text{C}_{22}\text{H}_{22}\text{O}_6$. Earlier works on phenolic aqSOA formation have reported that oligomers can form via the coupling of phenoxy
249 radicals or phenoxy and cyclohexadienyl radicals (Sun et al., 2010; Yu et al., 2014; Vione et al., 2019). In this work, phenoxy
250 radicals (in resonance with a carbon-centered cyclohexadienyl radical) can be generated from several processes such as the
251 oxidation of ground-state VL by $^3\text{VL}^*$ via H-atom abstraction or electron transfer coupled with proton transfer from the
252 phenoxyl radical cation or from solvent water (Neumann et al., 1986a, 1986b; Anastasio et al., 1997) and photoinduced O-H
253 bond-breaking (Berto et al., 2016). Also, similar reactions can be initiated by $\cdot\text{OH}$ (Gelencsér et al., 2003; Hoffer et al., 2004;
254 Chang and Thompson, 2010; Sun et al., 2010), which in this study can be generated from the reaction between $^3\text{VL}^*$ and O_2 ,
255 as well as nitrate photolysis. Trace amounts of H_2O_2 could be formed during VL photodegradation (Li et al., 2014), similar to
256 the case of other phenolic compounds (Anastasio et al., 1997). In addition, ring-opening products (Fig. S5) from fragmentation
257 in both VL^* and $\text{VL}+\text{AN}$ may have reacted with VL or dissolved ammonia to generate $\text{C}_{10}\text{H}_{10}\text{O}_5$ (No. 5, Table S2) (Pang et
258 al., 2019b) or a potential imidazole derivative ($\text{C}_5\text{H}_5\text{N}_3\text{O}_2$; No. 6, Table S2), respectively. Moreover, nitrate photolysis products
259 promoted functionalization and nitration (e.g., $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{10}\text{N}_2\text{O}_9$; No. 4, Table S2).

260 The molecular transformation of VL upon photosensitized oxidation was examined using the van Krevelen diagrams
261 (Fig. S7). For all experiments (A1-14; Table 2) in this study, the O:C and H:C ratios of the products were similar to those
262 observed from the aging of other phenolic compounds (Yu et al., 2014) and BB aerosols (Qi et al., 2019). Under N₂-saturated
263 conditions, oligomers with O:C ratios ≤ 0.6 were dominant in VL*, while smaller molecules ($n_c \leq 8$) with higher O:C ratios
264 (up to 0.8) were also observed for VL+AN. In contrast, more products with higher O:C ratios (≥ 0.6) were noted under air-
265 saturated conditions for both VL* and VL+AN. For experiments A5 to A8, H:C ratios were mostly around 1.0 and double
266 bond equivalent (DBE) values were typically (58% of the 50 most abundant products) > 7 , indicating that the products were
267 mainly oxidized aromatic compounds (Xie et al., 2020). Compounds with H:C ≤ 1.0 and O:C ≤ 0.5 are common for aromatic
268 species, while compounds with H:C ≥ 1.5 and O:C ≤ 0.5 are typical for more aliphatic species (Mazzoleni et al., 2012;
269 Kourtchev et al., 2014; Jiang et al., 2021). In contrast, Loisel et al. (2021) reported mainly oxygenated aliphatic-like compounds
270 from the direct irradiation of VL (0.1 mM), attributable to their use of ESI in the negative ion mode, which has higher sensitivity
271 for detecting compounds such as carboxylic acids (Holčapek et al., 2010; Liigand et al., 2017), and solid-phase
272 extraction (SPE) procedure causing the loss of some oligomers (LeClair et al., 2012; Zhao et al., 2013; Bianco et al., 2019).
273 Among experiments A5 to A8, VL+AN under air-saturated conditions (A7) had the highest normalized abundance of products
274 and $\langle OS_c \rangle$, probably due to the combined influence of ³VL* and enhanced VL nitration in the presence of O₂. Our measured
275 $\langle OS_c \rangle$ for all experiments range from -0.28 to +0.12, while other studies on phenolic aqSOA formation reported $\langle OS_c \rangle$
276 ranging from -0.14 to +0.47 (Sun et al., 2010) and 0.04 to 0.74 (Yu et al., 2014). The $\langle OS_c \rangle$ in this study likely were lower
277 estimates since we excluded contributions from ring-opening products, which may have higher OS_c values as these products
278 are not detectable in the positive ion mode. In brief, more oxidized aqSOA and higher normalized abundance of products such
279 as oligomers and functionalized monomers were noted under air-saturated conditions due to efficient VL oxidation by ³VL*
280 in the presence of O₂. Compared to N₂-saturated condition, the higher normalized abundance of N-containing products under
281 air-saturated condition for VL+AN (at pH 4) suggests a potential enhancement of VL nitration in the presence of O₂.

282 Illumination of phenolic aromatic carbonyls with high molar absorptivities ($\epsilon_{\lambda, \max}$) (~ 8 to $22 \times 10^3 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-1}$) leads to
283 an overall loss of light absorption but increased absorbance at longer wavelengths ($> 350 \text{ nm}$), where the carbonyls did not
284 initially absorb light (Smith et al., 2016). Fig. 3a illustrates the changes in total absorbance from 350 to 550 nm of VL* and
285 VL+AN under N₂- and air-saturated conditions. The absorption spectra of VL* under air- and N₂- saturated conditions (pH 4)
286 at different time intervals are shown in Fig. S8. For both VL* and VL+AN, evident absorbance enhancement was observed
287 under air-saturated conditions, while the absorbance changes under N₂-saturated conditions were minimal, consistent with the
288 VL decay trends. Dimers and functionalized products have been shown to contribute to chromophore formation for the aqueous
289 photo-oxidation of guaiacyl acetone (another aromatic phenolic carbonyl) by ³DMB* (Jiang et al., 2021). Based on this, the
290 higher normalized abundance of oligomers, which have large, conjugated π -electron systems (Chang and Thompson, 2010),
291 and hydroxylated products (Li et al., 2014; Zhao et al., 2015) observed under air-saturated conditions have contributed to the
292 absorbance enhancement. However, it is worth noting that the products detected may not have contributed significantly to the
293 total products formed and hence may not be the primary contributors to the absorbance enhancement. As mentioned earlier,

294 the major products detected in this study are probably those with high concentration or high ionization efficiency in the positive
295 ESI mode. In other words, the absorbance enhancement may not necessarily correlate directly with the products detected.

296 Correlating speciated chromophores with absorbance changes may be useful in demonstrating how aqSOA influence
297 the Earth's radiative balance and identifying chemical reactions that can affect the overall light absorption by aqSOA. This
298 can be accomplished by using liquid chromatography coupled with photodiode array (PDA) detector and high-resolution mass
299 spectrometry (LC/PDA/HRMS platform) (e.g., Lin et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2021; Misovich et al., 2021). In our experiments,
300 VL (and GUA) concentration measurements, product characterization, and absorbance measurements were performed using
301 UHPLC-PDA, UHPLC-qToF-MS, and UV-Vis spectrophotometry, respectively. A similar approach is then possible using the
302 current methods in this work by matching the retention time (RT) of the products detected using UHPLC-ToF-MS with that
303 in the PDA. However, the concentration of the chromophores in this study is below the detection limit of the PDA based on
304 the lack of distinct PDA signals from the products. Absorbance increase at > 350 nm has also been reported for the
305 photosensitized oxidation of phenol and 4-phenoxyphenol (De Laurentiis et al., 2013a, 2013b) and direct photolysis of tyrosine
306 and 4-phenoxyphenol (Bianco et al., 2014) in which dimers have been identified as initial substrates. The continuous
307 absorbance enhancement throughout 6 h of irradiation correlated with the observation of oligomers and nitrated compounds
308 after irradiation. However, the increasing concentration of small organic acids (Fig. S5) throughout the experiments suggests
309 that fragmentation, which results in the decomposition of initially formed oligomers and formation of smaller oxygenated
310 products (Huang et al., 2018), is important at longer irradiation times. Overall, these trends establish that compared to N_2 -
311 saturated conditions, VL oxidation by $^3VL^*$ under air-saturated conditions (O_2 is present) enabled the efficient formation of
312 light-absorbing compounds from both VL^* and $VL+AN$.

313 **3.1.2 VL photo-oxidation under varying pH conditions**

314 The reactions of $^3C^*$ (Smith et al., 2014, 2015, 2016), aromatic photonitration by nitrate (Machado and Boule, 1995; Dzengel
315 et al., 1999; Vione et al., 2005; Minero et al., 2007), and N(III)-mediated VL photo-oxidation (Pang et al., 2019a) have been
316 demonstrated to be pH-dependent. In this study, the effect of pH on the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL was investigated
317 over the pH range of 2.5 to 4, which is within typical cloud pH values (2-7) (Pye et al., 2020). The decay rate constants for
318 both VL^* and $VL+AN$ increased by 1.6 and 1.4 times, respectively, as pH decreased from 4 to 2.5 (Table 2). These differences
319 in decay rate constants are small but statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). The pK_a for the $^3VL^*$ has been reported to be 4.0 (Smith
320 et al., 2016). As there is a greater fraction of $^3VL^*$ that are protonated at pH 2.5 (0.96) than at pH 4 (0.50), it is possible that
321 the pH dependence of the VL decay rate constants observed in this study is due to $^3VL^*$ being more reactive in its protonated
322 form. Smith et al. (2016) also observed a pH dependence for the direct photodegradation of VL (0.005 mM) (rate constants at
323 $pH \leq 3$ are ~two times lower than at $pH \geq 5$) which has been attributed to the sensitivity of the excimer of VL (i.e., the charge-
324 transfer complex formed between an excited state VL molecule and a separate ground state VL molecule; Birks, 1973, Turro
325 et al., 2010) to acid-base chemistry. The opposite trend observed in this study for 0.1 mM VL may be due to the reactivities of
326 the protonated and neutral forms of $^3VL^*$ being dependent on VL concentration (Smith et al., 2016). The quantum yield for

327 direct VL photodegradation is higher at pH 5 than at pH 2 for 0.005 mM VL, but they are not statistically different for 0.03
328 mM VL (Smith et al., 2016). As pH decreases, the higher reactivity of $^3\text{VL}^*$ and sensitivity of the excimer of VL to acid-base
329 chemistry may have led to faster VL photo-oxidation. Similar to pH 4 experiments, comparable decay rate constants between
330 VL^* and $\text{VL}+\text{AN}$ were also noted at $\text{pH} < 4$, again suggesting the predominant role of $^3\text{VL}^*$ chemistry compared to nitrate,
331 likely due to the high VL concentration (0.1 mM) used in this study.

332 As pH decreased, the normalized abundance of products, particularly oligomers and functionalized monomers, was
333 higher for both VL^* and $\text{VL}+\text{AN}$, consistent with $^3\text{VL}^*$ potentially being more reactive in its protonated form. The most
334 abundant products observed were a substituted VL ($\text{C}_{10}\text{H}_{10}\text{O}_5$; No. 5, Table S2) and VL dimer ($\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{14}\text{O}_6$; No. 7, Table S2) at
335 pH 4 and $\text{pH} < 4$, respectively (Figs. 1c-h). Furthermore, a tetramer ($\text{C}_{31}\text{H}_{24}\text{O}_{11}$) was observed only in VL^* at pH 2.5. For
336 $\text{VL}+\text{AN}$, the normalized abundance of N-containing compounds was also higher at lower pH (Table 2), likely due to increased
337 $\cdot\text{OH}$ and $\cdot\text{NO}_2$ formation, which may be caused by the dependence of N(III) ($\text{NO}_2^- + \text{HONO}$) speciation on solution acidity
338 (Pang et al., 2019a). At pH 3.3, half of N(III) exists as HONO (Fischer and Warneck, 1996; Pang et al., 2019a), which has a
339 higher quantum yield for $\cdot\text{OH}$ formation than that of NO_2^- in the near-UV region (Arakaki et al., 1999; Kim et al., 2014). Also,
340 $\text{NO}_2^-/\text{HONO}$ can generate $\cdot\text{NO}_2$ via oxidation by $\cdot\text{OH}$ (Reactions 4 and 10; Table 1) (Pang et al., 2019a). At $\text{pH} < 4$, $^3\text{VL}^*$
341 likely have higher reactivity as suggested by the increased normalized abundance of oligomers (e.g., $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{14}\text{O}_6$; No. 7, Table
342 S2 and $\text{C}_{31}\text{H}_{24}\text{O}_{11}$) and N-containing compounds (e.g., $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{10}\text{N}_2\text{O}_9$; No. 4, Table S2 and $\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_{14}\text{N}_2\text{O}_{10}$) (Fig. 2). The most
343 abundant product at $\text{pH} < 4$, $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{14}\text{O}_6$ (No. 7, Table S2), is likely a C–O coupled dimer. In previous studies on phenolic aqSOA
344 formation, the generation of phenolic dimers has been proposed to occur via C–C or C–O coupling of phenoxy radicals (Sun
345 et al., 2010; Yu et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2020; Misovich et al., 2021). Similarly, functionalized monomers
346 such as $\text{C}_7\text{H}_6\text{O}_3$ (demethylated VL; No. 8, Table S2) and hydroxylated products (e.g., $\text{C}_8\text{H}_8\text{O}_4$; No. 9, Table S2) also had
347 increased normalized abundance for both VL^* and $\text{VL}+\text{AN}$. The formation of $\text{C}_7\text{H}_6\text{O}_3$ (No. 8, Table S2), which varies from
348 the structure of VL by CH_2 , can be explained by $\cdot\text{OH}$ addition at the carbon containing the methoxy group, succeeded by the
349 elimination of a methoxy radical ($\cdot\text{OCH}_3$) (Yee et al., 2013). This reaction has also been postulated for the $\cdot\text{OH}$ oxidation of
350 syringol (2,6-dimethoxyphenol) (Yee et al., 2013) and transformation of DMB in a system composed of guaiacyl acetone and
351 $^3\text{DMB}^*$ (Misovich et al., 2021). The potential imidazole derivative ($\text{C}_5\text{H}_5\text{N}_3\text{O}_2$; No. 6, Table S2) was observed only at pH 4,
352 following the pH dependence of ammonium speciation ($\text{pK}_a = 9.25$). Imidazole formation requires the nucleophilic attack of
353 ammonia on the carbonyl group (Yu et al., 2011), and at pH 4, the concentration of dissolved ammonia in $\text{VL}+\text{AN}$ was about
354 10 or 30 times higher than that at pH 3 or pH 2.5, respectively. For the pH values considered in this study, the O:C and H:C
355 ratios in VL^* and $\text{VL}+\text{AN}$ had no significant differences (Figs. S7c–d and S9), but molecules with higher O:C ratios (> 0.6)
356 were more abundant at $\text{pH} < 4$. In addition, the $\langle\text{OS}_c\rangle$ at $\text{pH} < 4$ for both VL^* and $\text{VL}+\text{AN}$ were higher than that at pH 4,
357 consistent with higher $\langle\text{OS}_c\rangle$ observed at pH 5 compared to pH 7 for the $\cdot\text{OH}$ -mediated photo-oxidation of syringol (Sun et
358 al., 2010). Essentially, the higher reactivity of $^3\text{VL}^*$ and predominance of HONO over nitrite at lower pH may have resulted
359 in higher normalized abundance of products mainly composed of oligomers and functionalized monomers.

360 Higher absorbance enhancement for both VL* and VL+AN (Fig. 3b) was observed as pH increased. To determine
361 whether the pH dependence is due to the acid-base chemistry of the products or of the reactions, the changes in the UV-Vis
362 absorption spectra of the aqSOA formed from VL* at pH 4 and 2.5 were measured over a range of pH conditions from 1.5 to
363 10.5 (Fig. S10). For both cases, the intensity of absorption at longer wavelengths significantly increased as the pH of the
364 solutions was raised. Moreover, the changes in the UV-Vis absorption spectra for the two solutions of varying pH are
365 comparable, suggesting that the observed pH dependence is rooted in acid-base chemistry of the reactions involving ³VL* or
366 the excimer of VL (Smith et al., 2016), as discussed earlier.

367 **3.1.3 Participation of ammonium in the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in the presence of AN**

368 Ammonium salts are an important constituent of atmospheric aerosols particles (Jimenez et al., 2009), and reactions between
369 dicarbonyls (e.g., glyoxal) and ammonia or primary amines form BrC (De Haan et al., 2009, 2011; Nozière et al., 2009; Shapiro
370 et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2013; Powelson et al., 2014; Gen et al., 2018; Mabato et al., 2019). Imidazole and imidazole derivatives
371 are the major products of glyoxal and ammonium sulfate reactions at pH 4 (Galloway et al., 2009; Yu et al., 2011; Sedehi et
372 al., 2013; Gen et al., 2018; Mabato et al., 2019). Here, we compared VL+AN and VL+SN at pH 4 under air-saturated conditions
373 to confirm the participation of ammonium in the photosensitized oxidation of VL. The presence of ammonium did not appear
374 to influence the kinetics of VL decay and light absorbance changes based on VL+AN and VL+SN having no statistically
375 significant difference ($p > 0.05$) with respect to VL decay rate constants (Table 2) and yielding comparable absorbance
376 enhancement (Fig. 3a), respectively. However, it is important to note that this may not be the case for lower concentrations of
377 VL. As previously stated, the reactions in this study were dominated by ³VL* chemistry, likely due to the higher molar
378 absorptivity of VL than that of nitrate and the high VL concentration used. Similarly, the normalized abundance of products
379 was comparable in both experiments (A7 and A9; Table 2) with C₁₀H₁₀O₅ (No. 5, Table S2) as the most abundant product
380 (Figs. 1d and S6a), but in VL+SN, there was a significant amount of a VL dimer (C₁₅H₁₂O₈; No. 10, Table S2). The normalized
381 abundance of N-containing compounds was also similar for VL+AN and VL+SN but the detected N-containing compounds
382 were distinct. Aside from the potential imidazole derivative (C₅H₅N₃O₂; No. 6, Table S2), C₈H₉NO₃ (No. 3, Table S2), possibly
383 an aminophenol, was also observed from VL+AN but only under N₂-saturated conditions (Fig. 1b), probably due to further
384 oxidation by ³VL*. Relative to VL+AN, the products from VL+SN had higher O:C ratios (e.g., C₇H₄N₂O₇; No. 11, Table S2),
385 OS_c, and <OS_c> values (Table 2). In summary, while the VL decay kinetics and absorbance enhancement for VL+AN and
386 VL+SN were similar, the product analysis supports the participation of ammonium in the aqueous-phase reactions.

387 **3.1.4 Distribution of potential BrC compounds**

388 Figure S11 plots the DBE values vs. number of carbons (n_c) (Lin et al., 2018) for the 50 most abundant products from pH 4
389 experiments under air-saturated conditions, along with reference to DBE values corresponding to fullerene-like hydrocarbons
390 (Lobodin et al., 2012), cata-condensed polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) (Siegmann and Sattler, 2000), and linear
391 conjugated polyenes with a general formula C_xH_{x+2}. As light absorption by BrC requires uninterrupted conjugation across a

392 significant part of the molecular structure, compounds with DBE/ n_c ratios (shaded area in Fig. S11) greater than that of linear
393 conjugated polyenes are potential BrC compounds (Lin et al., 2018). Based on this criterion and the observed absorbance
394 enhancement at > 350 nm (Fig. 3), the majority of the 50 most abundant products from pH 4 experiments under air-saturated
395 conditions were potential BrC chromophores composed of monomers and oligomers up to tetramers. However, as ESI-detected
396 compounds in BB organic aerosols has been reported to be mainly molecules with $n_c < 25$ (Lin et al., 2018), there may be
397 higher oligomers that were not detected in our reaction systems.

398 **3.2 Effect of reactants concentration and molar ratios on the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in the aqueous** 399 **phase**

400 To examine the influence of VL and AN concentration and their molar ratios on the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL,
401 we also characterized the reaction products from lower [VL] (0.01 mM VL*; A10; Table 2), lower [VL] and equal molar ratio
402 of VL/AN (0.01 mM VL + 0.01 mM AN; A11; Table 2), and lower [VL] and 1:100 molar ratio of VL/AN (0.01 mM VL + 1
403 mM AN; A12; Table 2) at pH 4. The normalized abundance of products from low [VL] experiments (A10-A12; Table 2) were
404 up to 1.4 times higher than that of high [VL] experiments (A5 and A7; Table 2). Nevertheless, the major products for both low
405 and high [VL] experiments were functionalized monomers (Figs. 1c-d and S12a-c) such as $C_8H_6O_4$ (No. 12, Table S2) and
406 $C_{10}H_{10}O_5$ (No. 5, Table S2). For both VL* and VL+AN, the contribution of < 200 m/z to the normalized abundance of products
407 was higher at low [VL] than at high [VL], while the opposite was observed for > 300 m/z (Fig. S12d). This indicates that
408 functionalization was favored at low [VL], as supported by the higher $\langle OS_c \rangle$, while oligomerization was the dominant pathway
409 at high [VL], consistent with more oligomers or polymeric products reported from high phenols concentration (e.g., 0.1 to 3
410 mM) (Li et al., 2014; Slikboer et al., 2015; Ye et al., 2019). As the formation mechanism of dimers and higher oligomers
411 during aqueous-phase reactions of phenolic compounds involves the coupling of phenoxy radicals (Kobayashi and
412 Higashimura, 2003; Sun et al., 2010), the enhanced oligomerization at high [VL] can be attributed to an increased concentration
413 of phenoxy radicals (in resonance with a carbon-centered cyclohexadienyl radical) at high [VL], promoting radical-radical
414 polymerization (Sun et al., 2010; Li et al., 2014). At low [VL], the contribution of < 200 m/z to the normalized abundance of
415 products was higher for 1:1 than 1:100 VL/AN molar ratio, suggesting the prevalence of functionalization for the former. In
416 addition, 1:1 VL/AN (A11; Table 2) had higher $\langle OS_c \rangle$ than 1:100 VL/AN (A12; Table 2), indicating the formation of more
417 oxidized products, but had fewer N-containing compounds compared to the latter. A possible explanation is that at 1:1 VL/AN,
418 VL may compete with NO_2^- for $\cdot OH$ (from nitrate or nitrite photolysis, Reaction 4; Table 1) and indirectly reduce $\cdot NO_2$.
419 Similarly, hydroxylation has been suggested to be a more important pathway for 1:1 VL/nitrite than in 1:10 VL/nitrite (Pang
420 et al., 2019a). Fragmentation, which leads to the decomposition of previously formed oligomers and generation of small,
421 oxygenated products such as organic acids (Huang et al., 2018), may also occur for the low [VL] experiments. However, its
422 importance would likely be observed at longer irradiation times, similar to the high [VL] experiments.

423 3.3 Oxidation of guaiacol by photosensitized reactions of VL

424 The oxidation of phenols by $^3\text{C}^*$ has been mainly studied using non-phenolic aromatic carbonyls (Anastasio et al., 1997; Smith
425 et al., 2014, 2015; Yu et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2020) and aromatic ketones (Canonica et al., 2000) as triplet precursors. Recently,
426 $^3\text{VL}^*$ has been shown to oxidize syringol (Smith et al., 2016), a non-carbonyl phenol, although the reaction products remain
427 unknown. In this section, we discussed the photo-oxidation of guaiacol (GUA), a non-carbonyl phenol that is also a
428 lignocellulosic BB pollutant (Kroflíč et al., 2015), in the presence of VL (GUA+VL). The dark experiments did not show any
429 substantial loss of VL or GUA (Fig. S3c). Due to its poor light absorption in the solar range, GUA is not an effective
430 photosensitizer (Smith et al., 2014; Yu et al., 2014). Accordingly, direct GUA photodegradation resulted in minimal decay,
431 which plateaued after ~3 hours. In the presence of VL, the GUA decay rate constant was 2.2 times higher due to the oxidation
432 of GUA by $^3\text{VL}^*$. The decay rate constant of VL in GUA+VL (A14; Table 2) was 3 times slower than that of VL* (A5; Table
433 2), which may be due to competition between ground-state VL and GUA for reactions with $^3\text{VL}^*$ or increased conversion of
434 $^3\text{VL}^*$ back to the ground state through the oxidation of GUA (Anastasio et al., 1997; Smith et al., 2014).

435 For GUA experiments, the normalized abundance of products was calculated only for GUA+VL (2.2; Table 2) as the
436 GUA signal from the UHPLC-qToF-MS in the positive ion mode was weak, which may introduce large uncertainties during
437 normalization. Nonetheless, the number of products detected from these experiments (178 and 844 for direct GUA
438 photodegradation and GUA+VL, respectively) corroborates the kinetics results. The major products (Fig. 4a) from direct GUA
439 photodegradation were $\text{C}_{14}\text{H}_{14}\text{O}_4$ (No. 13, Table S2), a typical GUA dimer, and $\text{C}_{21}\text{H}_{20}\text{O}_6$ (No. 14, Table S2), a trimer which
440 likely originated from photoinduced O-H bond-breaking (Berto et al., 2016). In general, higher absolute signal intensities were
441 noted for oligomers (e.g., $\text{C}_{14}\text{H}_{14}\text{O}_4$, No. 13 and $\text{C}_{21}\text{H}_{20}\text{O}_6$, No. 14, Table S2) and hydroxylated products (e.g., $\text{C}_7\text{H}_8\text{O}_4$) in
442 GUA+VL, similar to those observed from GUA oxidation by $^3\text{DMB}^*$ or $\cdot\text{OH}$ (from H_2O_2 photolysis) (Yu et al., 2014; Jiang
443 et al., 2021). Also, a potential GUA tetramer ($\text{C}_{28}\text{H}_{26}\text{O}_8$, No. 15, Table S2) was observed only in GUA+VL, consistent with
444 more efficient oligomer formation from the triplet-mediated oxidation of phenols relative to direct photodegradation (Yu et al.,
445 2014). The products from the direct GUA photodegradation and GUA+VL had mostly similar OS_c values (-0.5 to 0.5) (Figs.
446 4b–c), falling into the criterion of biomass burning organic aerosol (BBOA) and semivolatile oxygenated organic aerosol (SV-
447 OOA) (Kroll et al., 2011). The corresponding absorbance changes for the GUA experiments (Fig. 3c) were consistent with the
448 observed VL and GUA decay trends and detected products. While minimal absorbance changes, which also plateaued after ~3
449 hours, were observed for direct GUA photodegradation, significant and continuous absorbance enhancement was noted for
450 GUA+VL. Compared to direct GUA photodegradation, GUA oxidation by photosensitized reactions of VL occurred rapidly
451 and yielded higher absolute signal intensities for oligomers and hydroxylated products, which likely contributed to the
452 pronounced absorbance enhancement. These findings indicate that phenol oxidation by $^3\text{VL}^*$ can also contribute to aqSOA
453 formation.

454

455

456 **4 Conclusions and atmospheric implications**

457 In this study, the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in the absence and presence of AN under atmospherically relevant
458 cloud and fog conditions have been shown to generate aqSOA composed of oligomers, functionalized monomers, oxygenated
459 ring-opening products, and nitrated compounds (from VL+AN). The oligomers from these reaction systems may be rather
460 recalcitrant to fragmentation based on their high normalized abundance, even at the longest irradiation time used in this study.
461 Nonetheless, the increasing concentration of small organic acids over time implies that fragmentation becomes important at
462 extended irradiation times. The reactions were observed to be influenced by O₂, pH, and reactants concentration and molar
463 ratios. Our results suggest that O₂ could be required for the secondary steps in VL decay (e.g., the reaction of ketyl radical and
464 O₂) via ³VL* to proceed. Compared to N₂-saturated conditions, ³VL*-initiated reactions under air-saturated conditions (O₂ is
465 present) proceeded rapidly, promoted the formation of more oxidized aqSOA, and generated products (e.g., oligomers,
466 functionalized monomers, and N-containing compounds) with higher normalized abundance which exhibited stronger light
467 absorption. For pH 4 experiments, the presence of both O₂ and nitrate resulted in the highest normalized abundance of products
468 (including N-containing compounds) and <OS_c>, which is attributed to O₂ promoting VL nitration. Nevertheless, further work
469 on the effect of O₂ on the reactive intermediates involved in the reactions is necessary to elucidate the mechanisms of direct
470 photosensitized oxidation of VL under air-saturated conditions. Additionally, the formation of oligomers from the direct
471 photosensitized oxidation of VL was promoted at low pH (< 4). Low VL concentration favored functionalization, while
472 oligomerization prevailed at high VL concentration, consistent with past works (Li et al., 2014; Slikboer et al., 2015; Ye et al.,
473 2019). Hydroxylation was observed to be important at equal molar ratios of VL and nitrate, likely due to VL competing with
474 nitrite for ·OH. Furthermore, the oxidation of guaiacol, a non-carbonyl phenol, via VL photosensitized reactions was shown to
475 form oligomers and hydroxylated products. Aromatic carbonyls and nitrophenols have been reported to be the most significant
476 classes of BrC in cloud water heavily affected by biomass burning in the North China Plain (Desyaterik et al., 2013).
477 Correspondingly, the most abundant products from our reaction systems (pH 4, air-saturated solutions) are mainly potential
478 BrC chromophores. These suggest that aqSOA generated in cloud/fog water from the oxidation of biomass burning aerosols
479 via direct photosensitized reactions and nitrate photolysis products can impact aerosol optical properties and radiative forcing,
480 particularly for areas where biomass burning is intensive.

481 Ammonium (and sodium) nitrate was not found to substantially affect the VL decay rate constants, likely due to the
482 much higher molar absorptivity of VL than nitrate and high VL concentration used in this work. However, the presence of
483 ammonium (and sodium) nitrate promoted functionalization and nitration, indicating the significance of nitrate photolysis for
484 aqSOA formation from biomass burning-derived compounds. This work demonstrates that nitration, which is an important
485 process for producing light-absorbing organics or BrC (Jacobson, 1999; Kahnt et al., 2013; Mohr et al., 2013; Laskin et al.,
486 2015; Teich et al., 2017; Li et al., 2020), can also affect the aqueous-phase processing of triplet-generating aromatics. In
487 addition, a potential imidazole derivative observed from VL+AN at pH 4 reveals that ammonium participates in aqSOA
488 formation from the photo-oxidation of phenolic aromatic carbonyls. This observation also suggests that the photosensitized
489 oxidation of phenolic aromatic carbonyls in the presence of AN could be a source of imidazoles in the aqueous phase. It is

490 important to understand the source of imidazoles due to their possible effects on human health, their photosensitizing potential,
491 and their effect on aerosol optical properties as BrC compounds (Teich et al., 2016).

492 A recent work (Ma et al., 2021) mimicking phenol oxidation by ³DMB* (a non-phenolic aromatic carbonyl) in more
493 concentrated conditions of aerosol particles containing high AN concentration (0.5 M) increased the photodegradation rate
494 constant for guaiacyl acetone (an aromatic phenolic carbonyl with high Henry's law constant, $1.2 \times 10^6 \text{ M atm}^{-1}$; McFall et al.,
495 2020) by > 20 times which was ascribed to [•]OH formation from nitrate photolysis (Brezonik and Fulkerson-Brekken, 1998;
496 Chu and Anastasio, 2003). The same study also estimated that reactions of phenols with high Henry's law constants (10^6 to 10^9
497 M atm^{-1}) can be important for SOA formation in aerosol particles, with mechanisms mainly governed by ³C* and ¹O₂ (Ma et
498 al., 2021). Likewise, Zhou et al. (2019) reported that the direct photodegradation of acetosyringone was faster by about 6 times
499 in the presence of 2 M NaClO₄. However, the opposite was noted for the photodegradation of VL in sodium sulfate or sodium
500 nitrate, which would occur slower (~2 times slower in 0.5 M sodium sulfate and ~10 times slower in 0.124 M sodium nitrate)
501 in aerosol particles relative to dilute aqueous phase in clouds (Loisel et al., 2021), implying that the nature of inorganic ions
502 may have an essential role in the photodegradation of organic compounds in the aqueous phase.

503 The concentrations of VL and nitrate can be significantly higher in aqueous aerosol particles than what we have used
504 to mimic cloud/fog water. As a major component of aerosols, nitrate can have concentrations as high as sulfate (Huang et al.,
505 2014). More studies should then explore the direct photosensitized oxidation of other biomass burning-derived phenolic
506 aromatic carbonyls, particularly those with high molar absorption coefficients. Based on our findings, the presence of nitrate
507 should be considered for examining aqSOA formation from these reactions. The influences of reaction conditions should also
508 be investigated to better understand the oxidation pathways. As aerosols comprise more complex mixtures of organic and
509 inorganic compounds, it is worthwhile to explore the impacts of other potential aerosol constituents on aqSOA formation and
510 photo-oxidation studies. This can also be beneficial in understanding the interplay among different reactions during photo-
511 oxidation. Considering that biomass burning emissions are expected to increase continuously, further studies on these aqSOA
512 formation pathways are strongly suggested.

513

514 *Data availability.*

515 The data used in this publication are available to the community and can be accessed by request to the corresponding author.

516 *Author contributions.*

517 BRGM designed and conducted the experiments; YL provided assistance in measurements and helped to analyze experimental
518 data; YJ provided assistance in measurements; BRGM, YL, and CKC wrote the paper. All co-authors contributed to the
519 discussion of the manuscript.

520 *Competing interests.*

521 The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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1089 **Table 1.** List of reactions involving reactive species relevant to this study.

No.	Reactions	References
1	$\text{NO}_3^- + h\nu \rightarrow \cdot\text{NO}_2 + \text{O}^-; \phi = 0.01$	Vione et al., 2006; Benedict et al., 2017
2	$\text{O}^- + \text{H}_3\text{O}^+ \leftrightarrow \cdot\text{OH} + \text{H}_2\text{O}$	
3	$\text{NO}_3^- + h\nu \rightarrow \text{NO}_2^- + \text{O}(^3\text{P}); \phi = 0.011$	
4	$\text{NO}_2^- + \cdot\text{OH} \rightarrow \cdot\text{NO}_2 + \text{OH}^- (k = 1.0 \times 10^{10} \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1})$	Mack and Bolton, 1999; Pang et al., 2019a
5	$\text{O}_2^{\cdot-} + \text{NO}_2^- + 2\text{H}^+ \rightarrow \cdot\text{NO}_2 + \text{H}_2\text{O}_2$	Vione et al., 2001; Pang et al., 2019a
6	$\text{NO}_2^- + h\nu \rightarrow \cdot\text{NO} + \text{O}^-; \phi_{\text{OH},300} = 6.7 (\pm 0.9)\%$	Fischer and Warneck, 1996; Mack and Bolton, 1999; Pang et al., 2019a
7	$\cdot\text{NO} + \text{O}_2 \leftrightarrow \cdot\text{ONOO}$	Goldstein and Czapski, 1995; Pang et al., 2019a
8	$\cdot\text{ONOO} + \cdot\text{NO} \rightarrow \text{ONOONO}$	
9	$\text{ONOONO} \rightarrow 2\cdot\text{NO}_2$	
10	$\text{HNO}_2 + \cdot\text{OH} \rightarrow \cdot\text{NO}_2 + \text{H}_2\text{O} (k = 2.6 \times 10^9 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1})$	Kim et al., 2014; Pang et al., 2019a

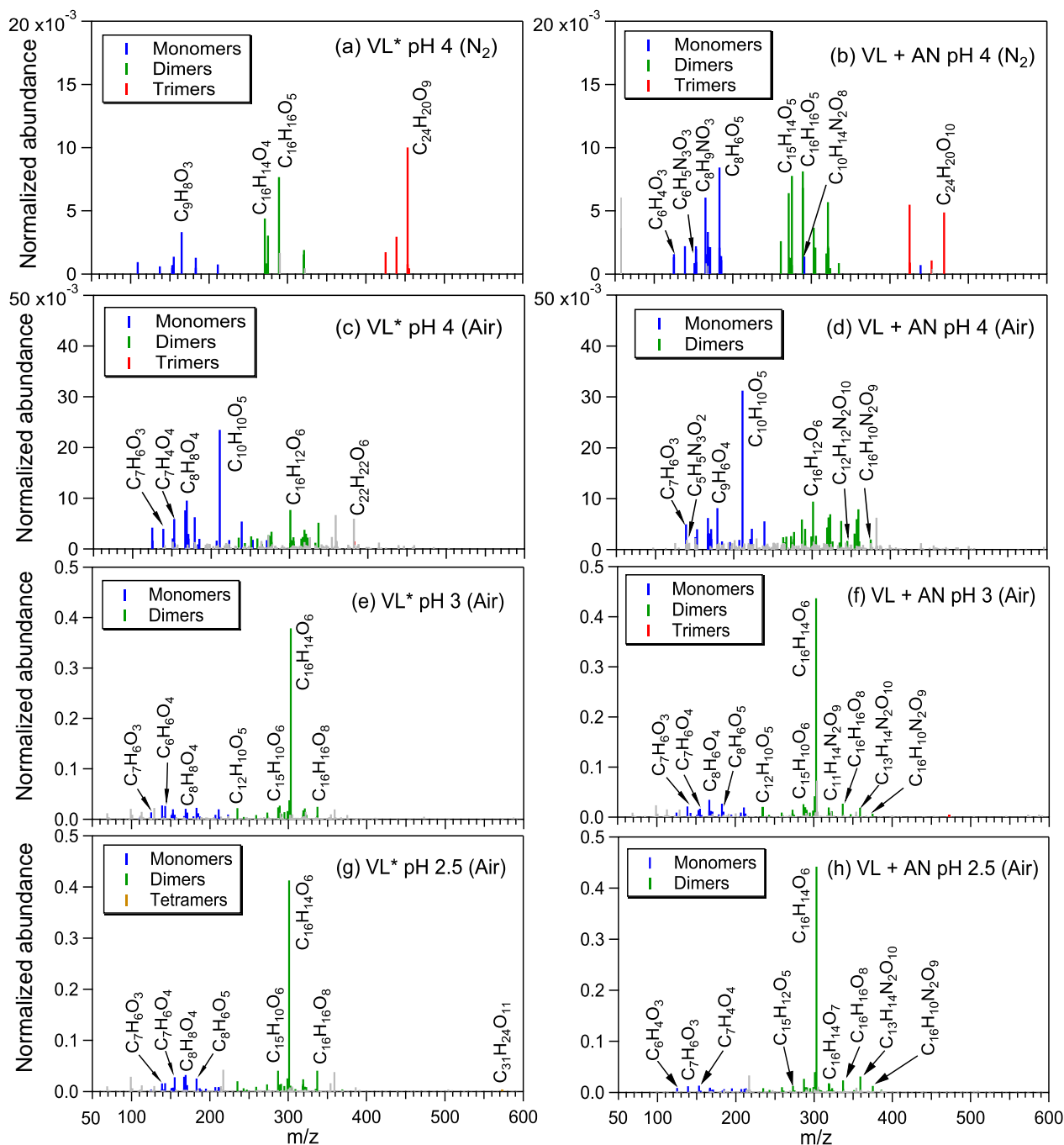
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1119 **Table 2.** Reaction conditions, initial VL (and GUA) decay rate constants, normalized abundance of products, and average
 1120 carbon oxidation state ($\langle OS_c \rangle$) in each experiment. Except where noted, the reaction systems consisted of VL (0.1 mM); GUA
 1121 (0.1 mM), AN (1 mM); SN (1 mM) under air-saturated conditions after 6 h of simulated sunlight irradiation. Analyses were
 1122 performed using UHPLC-qToF-MS equipped with an ESI source and operated in the positive ion mode.

Exp no.	pH	Reaction conditions	Initial VL (and GUA) decay rate constants (min^{-1}) ^b	Ratio of 50 most abundant products to total products ^c	Normalized abundance of products ^d	Normalized abundance of N-containing compounds ^d	$\langle OS_c \rangle^e$ (OS_c of VL: -0.25; OS_c of GUA: -0.57)
A1	2.5	VL*	$2.0 \times 10^{-2} \pm 5.8 \times 10^{-5}$	0.59	1.7 ± 0.16	N/A	-0.05
A2		VL+AN	$1.7 \times 10^{-2} \pm 7.3 \times 10^{-4}$	0.63	1.4 ± 0.19	5.3×10^{-2}	-0.04
A3	3	VL*	$1.5 \times 10^{-2} \pm 4.2 \times 10^{-4}$	0.53	1.9 ± 0.33	N/A	-0.04
A4		VL+AN	$1.5 \times 10^{-2} \pm 2.3 \times 10^{-4}$	0.56	1.9 ± 0.30	3.6×10^{-2}	-0.05
A5	4	VL*	$1.2 \times 10^{-2} \pm 5.9 \times 10^{-4}$	0.58	0.26 ± 0.42	N/A	-0.16
A6		VL* (N ₂ -saturated)	$3.2 \times 10^{-3} \pm 1.1 \times 10^{-3}$	0.96	$4.7 \times 10^{-2} \pm 0.0027$	N/A	-0.24
A7		VL+AN	$1.2 \times 10^{-2} \pm 8.8 \times 10^{-4}$	0.53	0.37 ± 0.38	1.7×10^{-2}	-0.13
A8		VL+AN (N ₂ -saturated)	$1.9 \times 10^{-3} \pm 9.2 \times 10^{-5}$	0.89	0.12 ± 0.0095	6.3×10^{-3}	-0.21
A9		VL+SN	$1.3 \times 10^{-2} \pm 3.5 \times 10^{-4}$	0.51	0.42 ± 0.33	1.7×10^{-2}	-0.07
A10		VL* (0.01 mM) ^a	N/A	0.90	0.37 ± 0.018	N/A	-0.07
A11		VL (0.01 mM) + AN (0.01 mM)	N/A	0.77	0.40 ± 0.074	8.6×10^{-3}	0.12
A12		VL (0.01 mM) + AN	N/A	0.42	0.45 ± 0.025	1.2×10^{-2}	-0.06
A13		GUA only	$6.2 \times 10^{-3} \pm 2.5 \times 10^{-4}$	0.77	N/A	N/A	-0.28
A14		GUA+VL	GUA: $1.4 \times 10^{-2} \pm 4.0 \times 10^{-4}$ VL: $4.3 \times 10^{-3} \pm 2.2 \times 10^{-4}$	0.60	2.2 ± 0.47	N/A	-0.27

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 1125 ^aIrradiation time for VL* (0.01 mM, A10) was 3 h. ^bThe data fitting was performed in the initial linear region. Each value is
 1126 the average of results from triplicate experiments. Errors represent one standard deviation. Kinetic measurements were not
 1127 performed for experiments marked with N/A. ^cRatio of the normalized abundance of the 50 most abundant products to that of
 1128 total products, except for direct GUA photodegradation and GUA+VL (A13–14) whose ratios are based on the absolute signals
 1129 of products. ^dThe normalized abundance of products was calculated using Eq. 2. The samples for experiments without nitrate
 1130 (marked with N/A) were not analyzed for N-containing compounds. For the GUA experiments, the normalized abundance of
 1131 products was calculated only for GUA+VL as the GUA signal from the UHPLC-qToF-MS in the positive ion mode was weak,
 1132 which may introduce large uncertainties during normalization. ^e $\langle OS_c \rangle$ of the 50 most abundant products.

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 1136 **Figure 1.** Reconstructed mass spectra of assigned peaks from (a) VL* pH 4 (N₂-saturated; A6), (b) VL+AN pH 4 (N₂-saturated;
 1137 A8), (c) VL* pH 4 (air-saturated; A5), (d) VL+AN pH 4 (air-saturated; A7), (e) VL* pH 3 (air-saturated; A3), (f) VL+AN pH
 1138 3 (air-saturated; A4), (g) VL* pH 2.5 (air-saturated; A1), and (h) VL+AN pH 2.5 (air-saturated; A2) after 6 h of simulated

1139 sunlight irradiation. The normalized abundance of products was calculated using Eq. 2. The 50 most abundant products
1140 contributed more than half of the total normalized abundance of products, and they were identified as monomers (blue), dimers
1141 (green), trimers (red), and tetramers (orange). Grey peaks denote peaks with low abundance or unassigned formula. Examples
1142 of high-intensity peaks were labeled with the corresponding neutral formulas. Note the different scales on the y-axes.

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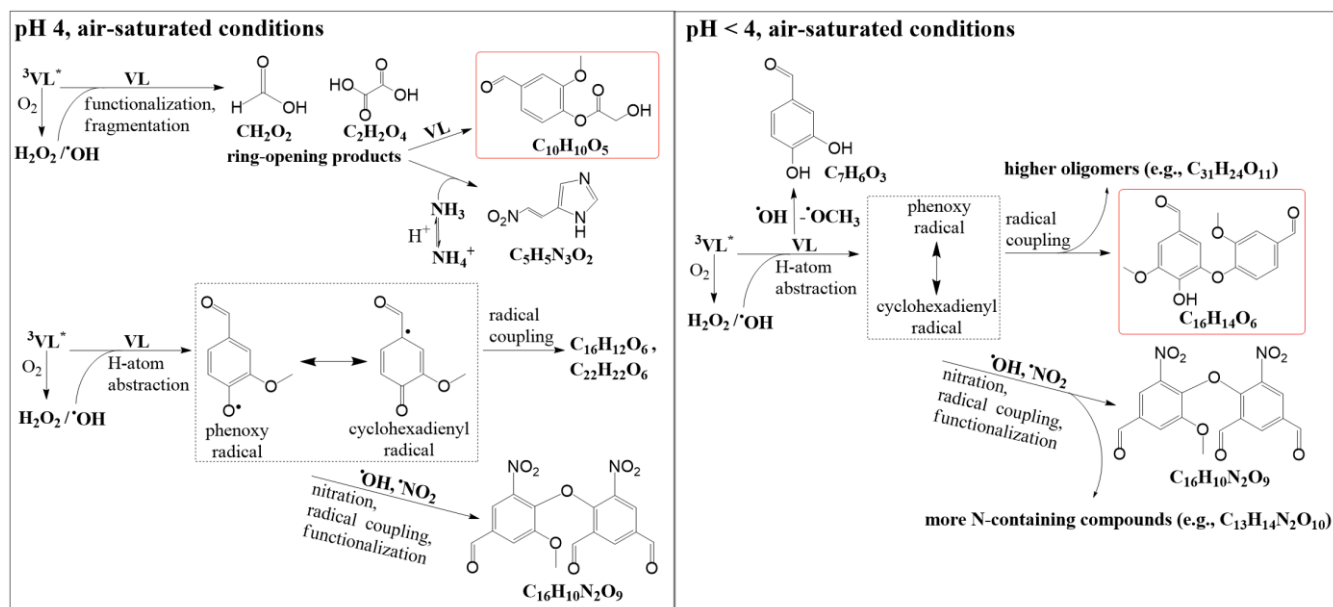
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1163 **Figure 2.** Potential aqSOA formation pathways via the direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in the absence (VL^*) and
 1164 presence of ammonium nitrate ($\text{VL}+\text{AN}$) at pH 4 and pH < 4 under air-saturated conditions. Product structures were proposed
 1165 based on the molecular formulas, DBE values, and MS/MS fragmentation patterns. The structures presented were the major
 1166 products detected using UHPLC-qToF-MS in positive ESI mode. The highlighted structures are the most abundant product
 1167 for each condition.

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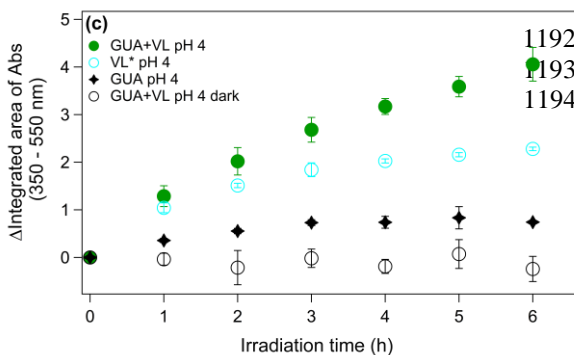
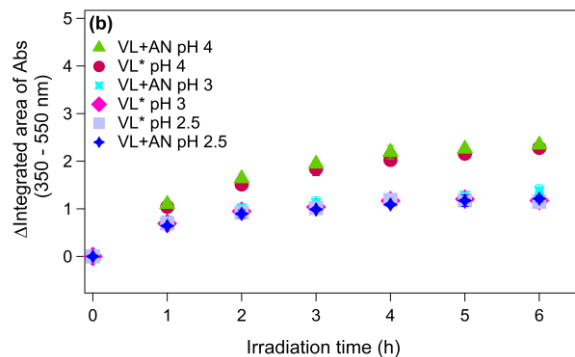
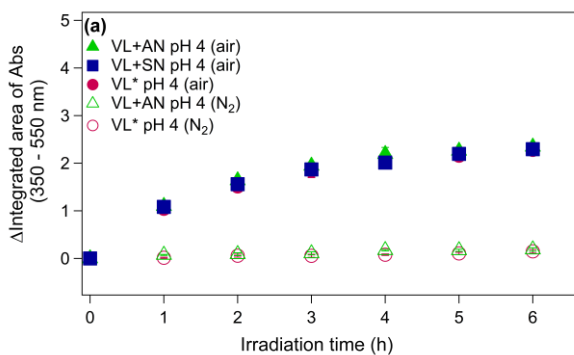
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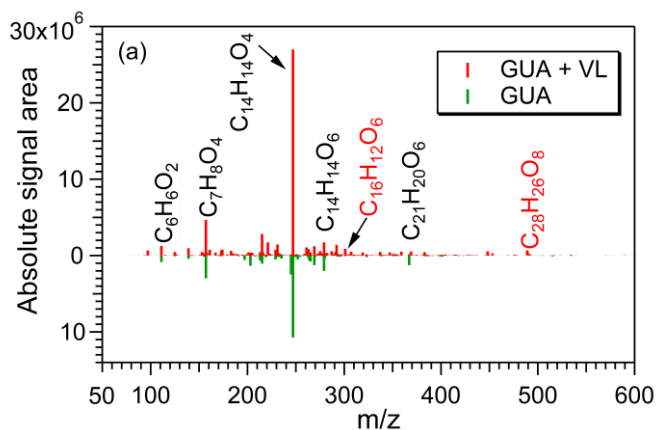
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Figure 3. (a–c) Increase in light absorption under different experimental conditions for direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in the absence (VL*) and presence of ammonium nitrate (VL+AN): (a) VL* and VL+AN at pH 4 under N₂- (A6, A8) and air-saturated (A5, A7) conditions. Direct photosensitized oxidation of VL in the presence of sodium nitrate (VL+SN) at pH 4 under air-saturated condition (A9). (b) Effect of pH on VL* and VL+AN at pH 2.5 (A1, A2), 3 (A3, A4), and 4 (A5, A7) under air-saturated conditions. (c) Increase in light absorption during direct GUA photodegradation (A13) and oxidation of GUA via photosensitized reactions of VL (GUA+VL; A14) at pH 4 under air-saturated conditions after 6 h of simulated sunlight irradiation. Error bars represent one standard deviation; most error bars are smaller than the markers.

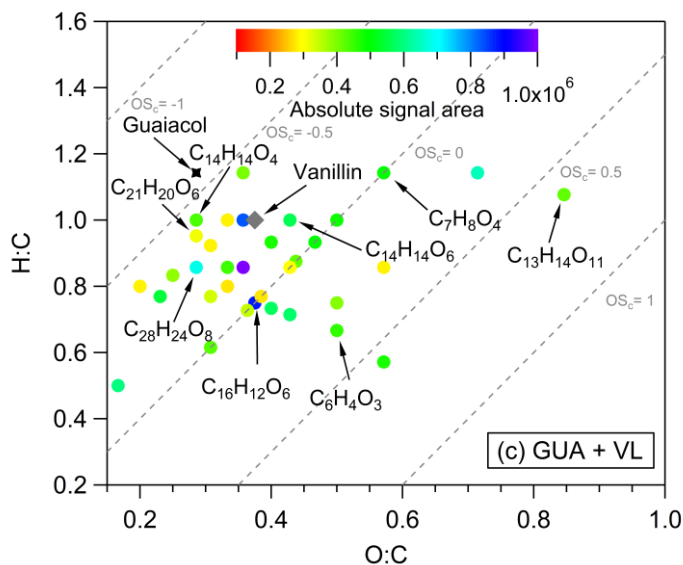
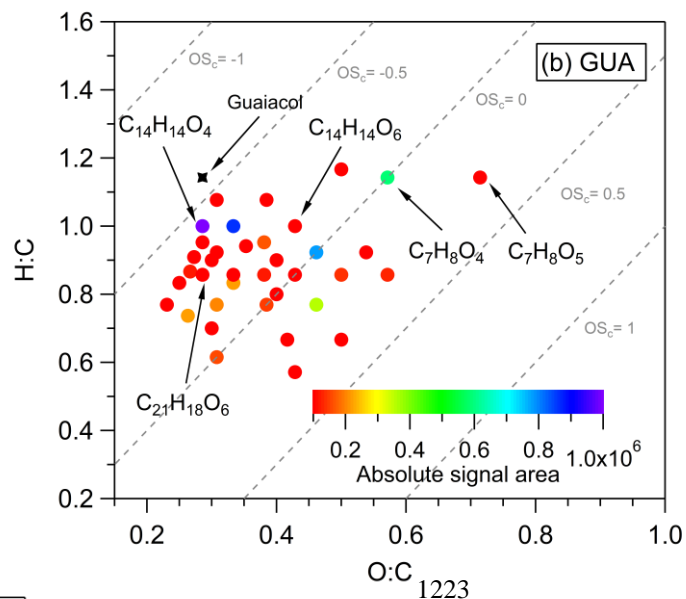
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1237 **Figure 4.** (a) Reconstructed mass spectra of assigned peaks from the direct GUA photodegradation (A13) and oxidation of
 1238 GUA via photosensitized reactions of VL (GUA+VL; A14) at pH 4 under air-saturated conditions after 6 h of simulated
 1239 sunlight irradiation. The y-axis is the absolute signal area of the products. Examples of high-intensity peaks were labeled with
 1240 the corresponding neutral formulas. The formulas in red text correspond to products observed only from GUA+VL. (b-c) van
 1241 Kerevlen diagrams of the 50 most abundant products from the (b) direct photodegradation of GUA (A13) and (c) GUA+VL
 1242 (A14) at pH 4 under air-saturated conditions after 6 h of simulated sunlight irradiation. The color bar denotes the absolute
 1243 signal area. The grey dashed lines indicate the carbon oxidation state values (e.g., $OS_c = -1, 0, \text{ and } 1$).