

Chemical Analysis of Polycyclic Aromatic Compounds

Edited by
TUAN VO-DINH

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PREFACE

Polycyclic aromatic compounds (PACs) are ubiquitous environmental pollutants that represent the largest class of suspected chemical carcinogens. PACs have been a topic of great interest in a wide spectrum of research disciplines ranging from analytical chemistry to biology, toxicology, and epidemiology, as evidenced by the many monographs devoted to PACs in the last decade. In the last few years, important advances have been made in improving existing analytical methods and developing new techniques for analysis of PACs. Many of these new techniques have appeared in technical journals and symposium proceedings but have not been critically reviewed in a comprehensive monograph. The need for such a monograph is critical because much instrumentation and many analytical technologies have emerged since the early 1980s.

Probably one of the most formidable challenges in chemical analysis of PACs is the characterization of complex mixtures. PACs generally occur in "real-life" samples as complex mixtures that vary greatly in concentration of individual components. The sensitivity and specificity required of analytical techniques are critical factors for environmental assessments and human health studies because compound structure can drastically affect the biological activity of PACs.

In the quest for elucidation of PAC carcinogenicity there is a continuing evolution from investigations of the parent homocyclic systems, the polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), to investigations of heterocyclic PAC systems. It is noteworthy that many PAHs undergo photochemical reactions in the atmosphere, leading to the production of heterocyclic PACs. Because PAHs cannot account for all the biological activities of many samples, this evolution has led to increased recognition of the important role of heteroatoms upon PAC genotoxicity. It is, therefore, a purpose of this monograph to deal with the broader class of PACs, which include both homocyclic and heterocyclic species.

Recently, analytical methods and instrumentation have experienced dramatic development and growth. New developments in experimental procedures and stationary phases for gas chromatography, high-performance liquid chromatography, and supercritical fluid chromatography have led to

improved analysis of PACs. Luminescence spectroscopy, with its inherent sensitivity for aromatic systems, has greatly benefited from the advances in laser and detector technologies. Multicomponent analysis of PAC mixtures can be performed more effectively using phase-resolved detection. Simple and rapid techniques such as synchronous luminescence and room-temperature phosphorescence provide cost-effective screening of complex samples, whereas site-selection or line-narrowing techniques offer selective means for chemical analysis. These advances have also been complemented by new developments in micelle-mediated separation and analysis methods. New developments in mass spectroscopy and in Fourier transform and resonance-enhanced multiphoton ionization mass spectrometry have further improved the structural characterization of complex mixtures. Infrared and Fourier transform infrared spectroscopies have complemented Raman spectroscopy in both qualitative and quantitative analysis of PACs. Innovative techniques such as UV-resonance Raman and surface-enhanced Raman spectroscopies have made significant advances in improving the sensitivity of detection. A new generation of analytical techniques based on photoionization spectroscopy, photothermal spectroscopy, and immunoabsorbent techniques has also been developed and applied to PAC analysis.

Early detection, understanding, and, ultimately, prevention of PAC-related carcinogenesis are among the most important challenges facing this and future generations. The development of effective methods and instrumentation for chemical analysis should provide a critical contribution toward achieving these important goals and toward ensuring the development of ecologically viable and safe technologies. It also provides the necessary tools to support the establishment of effective strategies and rational policies to protect ecosystems as well as the health and well-being of people.

It is our hope that the information contained in this monograph will foster the critical and creative thinking needed to develop the full potential of analytical techniques for the important class of PACs and will contribute to fundamental basic knowledge while ensuring harmonious relationships among mankind, the environment, and technology.

Ogk Ridge, Tennessee
January 1989

TUAN VO-DINH

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TUAN VO-DINH

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1	SIGNIFICANCE OF CHEMICAL ANALYSIS OF POLYCYCLIC AROMATIC COMPOUNDS AND RELATED BIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS	1
	<i>Tuan Vo-Dinh</i>	
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Polycyclic Aromatic Compounds: From PAH to PAC	1
3.	Definition of PACs	3
4.	Occurrence and Detection of PACs	4
4.1.	Energy Sources	5
4.2.	Industrial and Urban Environments	5
4.3.	Indoor Air	8
4.4.	Foods	9
4.5.	Marine Environments	9
4.6.	Plants	9
5.	Importance of Heterocyclic PACs	9
5.1.	Nitrogen-Containing PACs	11
5.2.	Oxygen-Containing PACs	16
5.3.	Chlorine-Containing PACs	16
5.4.	Sulfur-Containing PACs	17
6.	Bioindicators for PACs: The New Frontier in Chemical Analysis	17
6.1.	Bioindicators	17
6.2.	Analytical Techniques	22
	Acknowledgment	25
	References	25

CHAPTER 2 THE FATE OF POLYCYCLIC AROMATIC COMPOUNDS IN THE ATMOSPHERE AND DURING SAMPLING 31

Douglas A. Lane

1. Abbreviations	31
2. Introduction	32
2.1. Formation and Emission of PACs	33
2.2. Vapor Pressure and Temperature	33
2.3. Particle Size Distribution	35
3. Chemical and Photochemical Reactions of PACs	35
3.1. Singlet Molecular Oxygen	35
3.2. PAH Oxidation under Simulated Atmospheric Conditions	40
3.3. Ozonolysis Reactions	43
3.4. PAH Ozonolysis under Simulated Atmospheric Conditions	44
3.5. OH Radical Reactions	47
3.6. Reactions with Oxides of Nitrogen and Nitric Acid	47
3.7. Reaction with Sulfur Oxides	49
3.8. Reactions with Other Species	50
4. Implications for Chemical Analysis of PACs	50
References	52

CHAPTER 3 GAS- AND LIQUID-CHROMATOGRAPHIC TECHNIQUES 59

John C. Fetzer

1. Introduction	59
2. Gas Chromatography	61
2.1. Analysis of PAC by GC	61
2.1.1. Bonded Phases in High-Temperature GC, 61	
2.1.2. Liquid-Crystal Phases, 63	
2.2. GC Detectors for PAC Analysis	64
2.3. Applications of GC to PAC Analysis	68

3. High-Performance Liquid Chromatography	71
3.1. The Application of HPLC Versus GC	71
3.2. Separations by Ring Number or Shape	73
3.3. HPLC Detectors for PAC Analysis	84
3.3.1. <i>Full-Spectrum Absorbance and Fluorescence Detectors</i> , 85	
3.3.2. <i>The Use of Laser-Based Detectors</i> , 94	
3.3.3. <i>The Use of GC Detectors in Micro-LC</i> , 95	
3.3.4. <i>Preparative-Scale HPLC with Secondary Detection</i> , 97	
3.4. Applications of HPLC to PAC Analysis	98
4. Summary	100
References	101

CHAPTER 4	CAPILLARY SUPERCRITICAL FLUID CHROMATOGRAPHY METHODS	111
	<i>Bob W. Wright and Richard D. Smith</i>	
1. Introduction		111
2. Properties of Supercritical Fluids		112
3. Chromatography with Supercritical Mobile Phases		118
3.1. Capillary vs. Packed-Column Considerations		119
4. Instrumentation		120
4.1. Pumping and Injection Systems		121
4.2. Capillary Columns		123
4.3. Restrictors		126
5. Applications		128
5.1. Flame Detection		128
5.2. UV and Fluorescence Detection		132
5.3. SFC-Mass Spectrometry		138
6. Related Techniques		143
6.1. Supercritical Fluid Extraction		143
6.2. Supercritical Fluid Fractionation		146
Acknowledgment		146
References		147

CHAPTER 5 MICELLE-MEDIATED METHODOLOGIES FOR THE PRECONCENTRATION AND SEPARATION OF POLYCYCLIC AROMATIC COMPOUNDS	151
<i>Willie L. Hinze, H. N. Singh, Zheng-Sheng Fu, Ronald W. Williams, Donald J. Kippenberger, Martin D. Morris, and Fawzy S. Sadek</i>	
1. Introduction	151
2. Micellar-Facilitated Sampling Considerations	152
3. Micelle-Mediated Extraction/Preconcentration of PACs	155
3.1. Cloud-Point Extractions	155
3.2. Extractions Based on the Differential Solubilizing Ability of Micelles	157
4. Micellar-Enhanced Ultrafiltration	159
5. Micellar Systems in Chromatographic Separation and Detection Schemes	159
5.1. Micellar Electrokinetic Capillary Chromatography	160
5.2. Micellar Liquid Chromatography	161
5.3. Micellar-Enhanced Detection	165
6. Conclusions	166
Acknowledgments	166
References	167
 CHAPTER 6 ULTRAVIOLET ABSORPTION AND LUMINESCENCE SPECTROMETRY: AN OVERVIEW OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS	 171
<i>M. Zander</i>	
1. Introduction	171
2. UV Absorption Spectrometry in PAC Analysis	171
2.1. Identification and Quantitative Determination	171
2.2. Structure Elucidation	175
3. Luminescence Spectrometry in PAC Analysis	176
3.1. Sensitivity	177
3.1.1. <i>External Heavy-Atom Effects</i> , 178	
3.1.2. <i>Instrumental Factors</i> , 180	

3.2. Selectivity	181
3.2.1. <i>Selective Fluorescence Quenching</i>	181
3.2.2. <i>Selective Phosphorescence Enhancement</i>	183
3.2.3. <i>Excitation-Energy Selection Techniques</i>	184
3.2.4. <i>Synchronous Luminescence Spectrometry</i>	188
3.3. Structure Elucidation	190
4. On the Role of Electronic Spectroscopic Methods in PAC Analysis	193
References	196

CHAPTER 7 PHASE-RESOLVED FLUORESCENCE SPECTROSCOPY 201

Linda B. McGown and Kasem Nithipatikom

1. Introduction	201
2. Theory	202
3. Instrumentation	205
4. Applications	206
4.1. Phase-Resolved Spectra	206
4.2. Quantitative Analysis of Multicomponent Systems	208
4.3. Phase-Resolved Suppression of Scattered Light	212
4.4. Qualitative Analysis	214
5. Conclusions	217
References	218

CHAPTER 8 MASS SPECTROMETRY OF POLYCYCLIC AROMATIC COMPOUNDS 219

Ronald A. Hites

1. Introduction	219
2. Electron-Impact Ionization	219
3. Positive Chemical Ionization	228
4. Negative Ion Techniques	232
4.1. Ionization by Electron Capture	232
4.2. Ionization by Reactions with Oxygen	239
5. Desorption Ionization Techniques	242
6. Multiphoton Ionization	248
7. Tandem Mass Spectroscopy	250

8. Liquid and Supercritical Fluid Mass Spectrometry	257
9. Summary	258
Acknowledgments	259
References	259

CHAPTER 9 LASER MULTIPHOTON IONIZATION SPECTROSCOPY OF POLYATOMIC MOLECULES	263
<i>Konstadinos Siomos</i>	
1. Introduction	263
1.1. Scope of the Chapter	263
1.2. Photoionization and Medium-Dependent Processes	264
1.2.1. <i>Effects of the Medium on the Spectroscopy of Molecules, 266</i>	
1.2.2. <i>The Electron and Ion State in the Condensed Phase, 268</i>	
1.2.3. <i>Effect of the Medium on the Ionization Processes, 268</i>	
2. Multiphoton Ionization	271
2.1. Multiphoton Absorption	271
2.2. Multiphoton Ionization	272
2.2.1. <i>Nonresonant (Coherent) Ionization, 272</i>	
2.2.2. <i>Frequency Dependence of the MPI Cross Section, 273</i>	
2.2.3. <i>Multiple Resonant (Stepwise) Ionization, 274</i>	
3. Experimental Techniques and Procedures	276
3.1. The Laser as Spectroscopic Light Source	276
3.1.1. <i>General Considerations, 276</i>	
3.1.2. <i>The Frequency Tunable Dye Laser, 277</i>	
3.2. Ionization Detection Techniques and Procedures	280
3.2.1. <i>The Photoionization Cell Detector: Measurements of Total Ionization Currents, 280</i>	
3.2.2. <i>The Multiphoton Ionization Mass Spectrometer: Selection and Identification of Ionic Species, 284</i>	

3.2.3. <i>Multiphoton Ionization Gas Chromatograph-Mass Spectrometer: Analysis of Complex Molecular Systems</i> , 287	
3.2.4. <i>Liquid-Phase Multiphoton Ionization Spectrometer: In Situ Detection of Organic Compounds</i> , 287	
4. Multiphoton Ionization of Polyatomic Molecules: Experiments and Results	293
4.1. Gaseous-Phase Experiments	293
4.1.1. <i>Non-Mass-Selective Measurements</i> , 293	
4.1.2. <i>Mass-Selective Multiphoton Ionization Measurements</i> , 297	
4.2. Liquid-Phase Experiments	301
4.2.1. <i>Multiphoton Ionization at Fixed Excitation Photon Energy</i> , 301	
4.2.2. <i>Multiphoton Ionization with Variable Excitation Photon Energy</i> , 303	
4.2.3. <i>Multiphoton Ionization as a Highly Sensitive Detection Technique in the Liquid Phase</i> , 315	
5. Multiphoton Ionization Detection: Future Developments and Limitations	319
Acknowledgments	320
References	320

CHAPTER 10 MULTIDIMENSIONAL RESONANCE TWO-PHOTON IONIZATION MASS SPECTROMETRIC-BASED ANALYSIS	327
<i>S. J. Weeks, A. P. D'Silva, and R. L. M. Dobson</i>	
1. Introduction	327
2. Background	328
2.1. The Analytical PAC Problem	328
2.2. Conventional Methods	330
2.3. Laser-Based Techniques	331
2.3.1. <i>Solid-State Cryogenic Fluorescence Approaches</i> , 332	
2.3.2. <i>Supersonic Expansion Fluorescence Techniques</i> , 332	
3. Resonance Two-Photon Ionization Mass Spectrometry (R2PI-MS)	336
3.1. Gas-Phase Laser-Analyte Interactions	336

3.2. Instrumentation	339
3.2.1. <i>Sample Introduction</i> , 339	
3.2.2. <i>Lasers</i> , 340	
3.2.3. <i>Mass Spectrometers</i> , 340	
4. Applications of R2PI-MS for PAC Determinations	342
4.1. R2PI-FTMS	342
4.2. SFI-RC-R2PI-TOFMS	344
4.3. LD-R2PI-TOFMS	345
4.4. CGC-R2PI-TOFMS	347
4.5. CGC-R2PI-TOFMS-TECD-LIF-FID	348
5. Summary: R2PI-MS for PAC Determinations	355
References	356
CHAPTER 11 PHOTOTHERMAL SPECTROSCOPY	361
<i>Michael D. Morris</i>	
1. Introduction	361
2. Thermal Lens Theory	363
2.1. General Aspects	363
2.2. The Single-Beam Thermal Lens	365
2.3. The Dual-Beam Thermal Lens	368
2.4. The Pulsed Thermal Lens	370
2.5. Path-Length Dependence of the Thermal Lens	371
2.6. Transverse Photothermal Deflection	372
2.7. Spatially Multiplexed Transverse Photothermal Deflection	374
3. Applications of Photothermal Techniques	378
3.1. Liquid Chromatography Detectors	378
3.2. Thin-Layer Chromatography Detectors	384
3.3. Photothermal Detectors for FTIR	386
4. Summary	388
References	389
CHAPTER 12 IMMUNOLOGICAL METHODS FOR THE DETECTION AND QUANTITATION OF EXPOSURE TO AROMATIC HYDROCARBONS	391
<i>Regina M. Santella and Marina Stefanidis</i>	
1. Introduction	391