Nonlinear Vibrational Spectroscopic Studies of the Adsorption and Speciation of Nitric Acid at the Vapor/Acid Solution Interface

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Nitric acid plays an important role in the heterogeneous chemistry of the atmosphere. Reactions involving HNO_3 at aqueous interfaces in the stratosphere and troposphere depend on the state of nitric acid at these surfaces. The vapor/liquid interface of HNO_3-H_2O binary solutions and $HNO_3-H_2O_4-H_2O$ ternary solutions are examined here using vibrational sum frequency spectroscopy (VSFS). Spectra of the NO_2 group at different HNO_3 mole fractions and under different polarization combinations are used to develop a detailed picture of these atmospherically important systems. Consistent with surface tension and spectroscopic measurements from other laboratories, molecular nitric acid is identified at the surface of concentrated solutions. However, the data here reveal the adsorption of two different hydrogen-bonded species of undissociated HNO_3 in the interfacial region that differ in their degree of solvation of the nitro group. The adsorption of these undissociated nitric acid species is shown to be sensitive to the $H_2O:HNO_3$ ratio as well as to the concentration of sulfuric acid.

1. Introduction

Liquid/vapor interfaces, particularly those containing inorganic salts, acids, and organic species, have received special attention recently because of the many chemical and physical processes that occur at aqueous surfaces in the atmosphere. For example, reports suggesting that heterogeneous reactions involving halide ions at the sea-salt aerosol surface release halogens into the atmosphere have initiated an ongoing series of experimental and theoretical investigations into the affinity of ions for the air/water interface.^{1–9} Similarly, much interest has been generated in the behavior of nitric and sulfuric acid at aqueous interfaces by the growing awareness of their key role in the surface chemistry of atmospheric aerosol particles.

Nitric acid is known as an end product of nitrogen oxide (NO_x) oxidation in the troposphere, and mechanisms for surface reactions such as the hydrolysis of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) to nitrous acid (HONO) and HNO₃ have been well-studied. ^{10,11} Recently it has been shown that HNO₃ can also be reduced back to photochemcially active nitrogen in "renoxification" reactions at aqueous surfaces, with potential impact on the concentration of NO_x species and O_3 in the troposphere. 12-14 Laboratory experiments have demonstrated that these surface reactions depend sensitively on the form of HNO3, whether dissociated or undissociated.¹² Nitric acid has also been shown to exist in both solid and liquid form in polar stratospheric clouds (PSCs). Solid PSCs are composed of H₂O and HNO₃ in crystalline form, and liquid PSC particles consist of supercooled ternary solutions of H₂SO₄, HNO₃, and H₂O.^{15,16} Such stratospheric clouds comprise acidic surfaces on which chlorine and NO_x processing reactions linked to polar ozone destruction are known to occur. 15 From these examples it is clear that a molecular-level description of the structure and composition of binary HNO₃-H₂O and ternary HNO3-H2SO4-H2O solution/vapor interfaces is essential to understanding the heterogeneous reactions that occur at such acidic aqueous surfaces throughout the atmosphere.

Any study of molecular properties at these surfaces requires a surface specific technique to distinguish between interfacial nitric acid species and bulk nitric acid. The surface sensitivity of traditional infrared techniques that can probe the liquid surface environment typically relies on the penetration depth of electromagnetic fields. For example, because of the midinfrared wavelengths employed, the probe depth of attenuated total reflectance-FTIR spectroscopy (ATR-FTIR) is on the order of microns. In contrast, in second-order nonlinear techniques such as VSFS, the surface specificity is determined only by how deeply into the bulk medium molecules are influenced by the presence of the interface, i.e., the depth of orientational anisotropy. Defined by this criterion, the liquid interface is very thin, typically several angstroms. ^{17–19} With its inherent surface sensitivity, sum-frequency spectroscopy is uniquely capable of probing molecular structure in the top layers of a liquid interface.

In 1999, Shultz and co-workers used VSFS to examine water structure at the surface of HNO3 aqueous solutions.20 On the basis of spectral intensity changes in the OH stretching mode of interfacial water molecules, they postulated the existence of undissociated HNO₃ at the vapor interface of concentrated solutions. However, the expected OH signature of the molecular acid was not observed in the sum-frequency spectra. Concurrently, Donaldson and Anderson reported that the surface tension of sulfuric acid-water and pure water decreased upon addition of nitric acid and attributed this to the adsorption of molecular HNO₃ at those vapor/solution interfaces.²¹ More recently, Finlayson-Pitts and co-workers identified an undisscociated nitric acid species at the concentrated solution surface using a combination of ATR-FTIR and SR-FTIR (single reflectance-FTIR) spectroscopies.²² However, as discussed above, these techniques do not have the inherent sensitivity necessary to probe the top molecular layers of the vapor/liquid interface.

We report here the results of VSFS measurements of binary aqueous solutions of nitric acid (HNO_3-H_2O) and ternary

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mixtures of nitric acid, sulfuric acid, and water ($HNO_3-H_2-SO_4-H_2O$). Vibrations of the nitro (NO_2) group of HNO_3 are used to examine the adsorption behavior and structure of undissociated nitric acid at the vapor/acid solution surface. The data provide direct evidence for two different hydrogen-bonded species of undissociated HNO_3 at the interface and suggest that these two species adsorb at different depths in the interfacial region.

2. Vibrational Sum-Frequency Spectroscopy: Background

Vibrational sum-frequency spectroscopy is described extensively in the literature and so only a brief summary is given here. $^{23-25}$ In VSFS, the vibrational spectrum of molecules at an interface between two isotropic media is obtained by spatially and temporally overlapping a tunable infrared beam (ω_{IR}) with a fixed-frequency visible beam (ω_{vis}) at the sample surface. These intense electric fields induce a nonlinear polarization in the medium that radiates at the sum of the infrared and visible frequencies, $\omega_{SF} = \omega_{IR} + \omega_{vis}$. The sum-frequency intensity is proportional to the intensities of the incident beams and to the square of the effective second-order susceptibility, $\chi_{ci}^{(2)}$.

$$I(\omega_{\rm SF}) \propto |\chi_{\rm eff}^{(2)}|^2 I(\omega_{\rm vis}) I(\omega_{\rm IR})$$
 (1)

The effective susceptibility $\chi^{(2)}_{\rm eff}$ is related to the true second-order susceptibility by Fresnel factors and unit polarization vectors for each beam. The second-order susceptibility $\chi^{(2)}$ can be expressed as the sum of a nonresonant component, $\chi^{(2)}_{\rm NR}$, and a resonant component for each vibrational mode ν , $\chi^{(2)}_{\rm R\nu}$.

$$\chi^{(2)} = \chi_{NR}^{(2)} + \sum_{\nu} \chi_{R\nu}^{(2)}$$
 (2)

In general, both $\chi_{NR}^{(2)}$ and $\chi_{R\nu}^{(2)}$ are complex quantities and their relative phases must be taken into account. In these studies, we assume that ω_{vis} is far enough from any electronic transitions and therefore that the nonresonant component is real.

The resonant susceptibility, $\chi_{\rm R}^{(2)}$, is related to the molecular hyperpolarizability, β , through the number density of probed molecules, N, and their orientation:

$$\chi_{\rm R}^{(2)} = \frac{N}{\epsilon_{\rm o}} \langle \beta \rangle \tag{3}$$

where the angular brackets denote an ensemble average over all possible molecular orientations. For conditions in which only the infrared frequency is near resonance to molecular transitions, the vibrational hyperpolarizability can be expressed as

$$\beta(\omega_{\rm IR}) = \sum_{\nu} \frac{\langle g | \hat{\alpha} | \nu \rangle \langle \nu | \hat{\mu} | g \rangle}{\omega_{\rm IR} - \omega_{\nu} + i\Gamma_{\nu}} \tag{4}$$

where the numerator represents the strength of the SF transition for vibrational mode ν , $|g\rangle$ and $|\nu\rangle$ are vibrational and ground states, and $\hat{\alpha}$ and $\hat{\mu}$ are the polarizability and dipole moment operators. Equation 4 illustrates that as the IR frequency is tuned and comes into resonance with vibrational modes of molecules at the surface, the sum-frequency response is enhanced, thus generating a vibrational spectrum of interfacial species.

Because the surface of a liquid has $C_{\infty \nu}$ symmetry, only 7 of the 27 elements of $\chi^{(2)}$ are nonzero and of these only 4 are unique. With the lab coordinates chosen so that z lies along the surface normal and the xz-plane is the plane of incidence, they

are $\chi_{xxz}^{(2)} = \chi_{yyz}^{(2)}$, $\chi_{zzx}^{(2)} = \chi_{yzy}^{(2)}$, $\chi_{zxx}^{(2)} = \chi_{zyy}^{(2)}$, and $\chi_{zzz}^{(2)}$. In addition, for ω_{vis} far from resonance, $\chi_{xzx}^{(2)} = \chi_{yzy}^{(2)} = \chi_{zxx}^{(2)} = \chi_{zyy}^{(2)}$. These four elements can be probed using combinations of incident and outgoing linearly polarized light, namely: ssp, sps (or pss), and ppp, where the letters represent light polarized parallel to the plane of incidence (p) or perpendicular to the plane of incidence (s). All polarization schemes are given in the format sumfrequency, visible, infrared.

3. Experimental Section

3.1. Sample Preparation. Spectral grade HNO $_3$ (70 wt %) and H $_2$ SO $_4$ (96 wt %) from Fisher Scientific were used as received. Binary HNO $_3$ –H $_2$ O and ternary HNO $_3$ –H $_2$ SO $_4$ –H $_2$ O solutions were prepared daily with 18 M Ω water from a Nanopure system and stored away from light to avoid decomposition. Samples were placed in a custom-designed cell made of KEL-F with CaF $_2$ input and BK-7 output windows and sealed with VITON O-rings. Prior to their use, the sample cell and all glassware were cleaned with an H $_2$ SO $_4$ /NOCHROMIX solution followed by copious rinses with Nanopure water.

3.2. Spectroscopic Measurements. Details of the broadbandwidth sum-frequency generation laser system have been described previously,26 so only a brief overview will be given here. The \sim 100 fs output of a Ti:sapphire laser at 800 nm is amplified and split, with approximately 15% of the output used to produce \sim 2 ps pulses directed to the interface. The remaining output is used in an optical parametric amplifier (OPA) where tunable infrared light from 3 to 10 μ m is produced. In the present studies, the OPA was tuned to the nitro (NO₂) antisymmetric stretching region $\sim 1675 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ where the IR energy was typically 6 μ J per pulse with \sim 175 cm⁻¹ bandwidth. The IR beam and sample cell were entirely enclosed in a box with an overpressure of dry air, which reduced IR losses due to adsorption by water vapor in this wavelength region. The experiments were conducted in external reflection geometry and the generated sumfrequency light was collected with a spectrometer and a liquid nitrogen cooled CCD camera. The spectra here were obtained during 20 min CCD acquisitions. Spectra were normalized with the nonresonant VSFS spectrum from an amorphous gold surface, and calibrated using the positions of narrow features in the gold spectrum due to water vapor absorption. The error in calibrating the IR frequency is ± 2 cm⁻¹. Prior to use in normalization, the Fresnel factors and unit polarization vector contributions were removed from the gold spectrum. Removal of these factors affected the spectral intensity but had no significant effect on the shape of the gold spectrum. At least three spectra per sample were taken on a given day and averaged, to document both reproducibility and sample stability. No significant evaporation of nitric acid from the solution surface (i.e., no loss of SF signal in successive spectra) was observed in repeated spectral acquisitions per sample. Furthermore, spectra presented here for all binary and ternary acid solutions were acquired over multiple days and averaged. All experiments were performed at room temperature.

As shown in eq 2, the second-order susceptibility is the sum of a nonresonant component and a resonant component; the resonant component is a sum of all of the contributing vibrational modes of the molecule. Because the SF intensity is related to the square of this coherent sum, interferences between nonresonant and resonant susceptibility elements can lead to distortions in peak shape and apparent peak frequency. Therefore, the VSFS spectra must be fit to accurately interpret the data. Following normalization and calibration, the VSFS spectra are analyzed using a line shape that accounts for the effects of

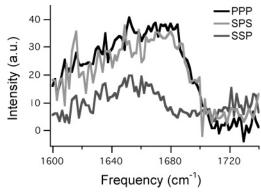


Figure 1. Sum-frequency spectra under ppp-, sps-, and ssp-polarizations of the vapor/solution interface of a 40 mol % HNO₃-H₂O binary mixture in the NO₂ antisymmetric stretching region.

homogeneous broadening (Lorentzian line shape) and inhomogeneous broadening (Gaussian line shape) because of the multitude of environments present in the condensed phase.^{27–29} Following standard practice, symmetric peak shapes are used here as a first approximation to the lineshapes of species contributing to the VSFS spectrum.

$$|\chi^{(2)}(\omega_{\rm SF})|^{(2)} = |\chi_{\rm NR}^{(2)} + \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \frac{A_{\nu}}{\omega_{\rm L} - \omega_{\rm IR} - i\Gamma_{\rm L}} \exp \left[-\frac{(\omega_{\rm L} - \omega_{\nu})^2}{\Gamma_{\nu}^2} \right] d\omega_{\rm L}|^2$$
 (5)

In eq 5, A_{ν} is the resonant amplitude, ω_{ν} is the resonant frequency, Γ_L (here, 2 cm⁻¹) and Γ_{ν} are the homogeneous and inhomogeneous line widths, and $\omega_{\rm L}$ is a variable over which the integral is evaluated. Each of the resonant terms and the nonresonant term has a unique phase, ϕ , associated with it. Because both ω_{vis} and ω_{SF} are far from electronic resonance, the nonresonant term is constrained to be real with ϕ_{NR} of either 0 or π . All spectra are fit to the line shape in eq 5 with a nonlinear Levenberg-Marquardt least-squares algorithm implemented by Wavemetrics, Inc. in their program Igor. For all spectral analysis in this study, we use a global fitting procedure, which uses a series of tightly held constraints on the peak phases, widths, and locations obtained from spectra recorded in several different (yet related) environments. Fitting the spectra in this manner leaves only the peak amplitudes as truly free parameters and enables a rigorous and confident fit to the VSFS data.

4. Experimental Results

4.1. VSFS Spectra of Binary HNO₃ and H₂O Solutions.

VSFS spectra of the 40 mol % nitric acid solution/vapor interface under ppp-, sps-, and ssp-polarization combinations are shown in Figure 1. A single feature is observed between 1600 and 1700 cm⁻¹ in the three polarization spectra. Interestingly, although the ppp- and sps-polarization spectra appear to be qualitatively similar, the ssp spectrum looks quite different. The polarization series was globally fit using eq 5 to constrain the fitting parameters; resonant peak widths and locations were held constant across the three spectra, and peak amplitudes and phases were allowed to vary. Initial attempts to fit all three spectra with a single resonant component and a (real) nonresonant background failed to produce adequate results. This inadequacy was interpreted as possible evidence for the presence of another resonant contribution being present in the system. In Figure 2, two resonant $\chi^{(2)}$ components along with a nonresonant contribution are used to globally fit the polarization

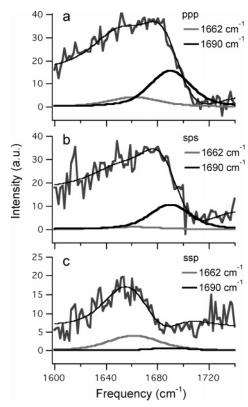


Figure 2. Global fitting results for sum-frequency spectra of a 40 mol % HNO₃-H₂O binary solution under (a) ppp-polarization, (b) spspolarization, and (c) ssp-polarization. Resonant peaks in the NO2 antisymmetric stretching region are shown below the spectra.

TABLE 1: Spectral Fitting Parameters for the VSFS Peaks in the NO₂ Antisymmetric Stretching Region of 40 mol % HNO₃ Solutions in ppp-, sps-, and ssp-Polarizations

	$1690 \pm 2~{\rm cm}^{-1}$	$1662 \pm 2~{\rm cm}^{-1}$
Γ_{ν} (cm ⁻¹)	18	23
A_{ν} ppp (au)	4.5	2.2
A_{ν} sps (au)	3.7	1.1
A_{ν} ssp (au)	0.85	2.2
ϕ_{ν} ppp (rad)	3.3	3.3
ϕ_{ν} sps (rad)	3.3	3.3
ϕ_{ν} ssp (rad)	6.28	4.28

series and produce excellent fits that are consistent across the set of data. The two resonant features are determined to be at 1690 ± 2 and 1662 ± 2 cm⁻¹. Parameters resulting from this fit of the polarization series, including the inhomogeneous width, Γ_{ν} , and the resonant amplitudes and phases, are presented in Table 1. The resonant phases shown are relative to a nonresonant phase of π .

In Figure 2, the polarization VSFS spectra have been deconvoluted to show each resonant contribution to the overall spectrum. In the ppp and sps spectra, the amplitude of the higher frequency feature dominates that of the lower frequency peak. The $\sim 1690 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ peak has about 2 times the amplitude as the \sim 1662 cm⁻¹ peak in the ppp spectrum, and about 3 times the amplitude in the sps spectrum. However, this relationship between the two features is reversed in the ssp spectrum; the lower frequency peak at $\sim 1662 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ dominates the spectrum and is about 2.5 times greater than the $\sim 1690 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ peak.

Two assignments are possible for these features at \sim 1662 and $\sim 1690 \text{ cm}^{-1}$. The antisymmetric NO₂ stretching mode of undissociated HNO₃ is observed the in 1650-1710 cm⁻¹ region, depending on its environment.^{30–32} Therefore, the spectral intensity in Figure 1 could arise from nitric acid adsorbed at

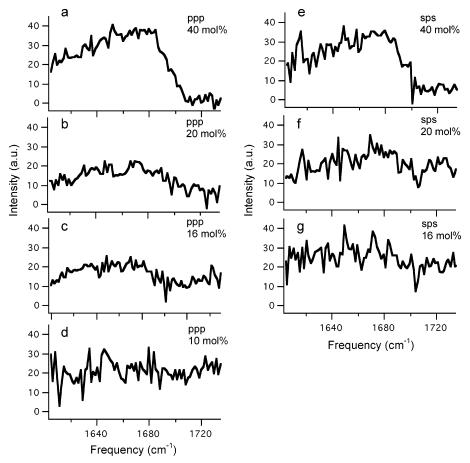


Figure 3. Sum-frequency spectra of the NO_2 antisymmetric stretching mode for HNO_3 – H_2O binary solutions. For ppp-polarization, the acid concentrations are (a) 40 mol %, (b) 20 mol %, (c) 16 mol %, and (d) 10 mol %. For sps-polarization, the concentrations are (e) 40 mol %, (f) 20 mol %, and (g) 16 mol %.

the interface in molecular form. However, recent molecular dynamics simulations predict a slight surface affinity for $NO_3^{-,33,34}$ and thus nitrate ions from HNO₃ dissociation could also contribute to the VSFS spectra. The planar, symmetric nitrate ion has four vibrational frequencies near 1370 (ν_3), 1043 (ν_1), 830 (ν_2), and 723 (ν_4) cm⁻¹.³⁵ Although none of the fundamental frequencies are near the 1600-1700 cm⁻¹ region, the overtone of the ν_2 band at 1657 cm⁻¹ ($2\nu_2$) has been observed in the resonance Raman spectrum of KNO₃ in water.³⁵ In aqueous solution, a reduction in nitrate ion symmetry to $C_{2\nu}$ renders ν_2 (and $2\nu_2$) both IR and Raman active, and therefore sum-frequency active.³⁵

To resolve these possible spectral assignments, VSFS experiments as a function of HNO₃ concentration were conducted. The dissociation of nitric acid observed in ATR-FTIR measurements²² and in bulk aqueous solutions show that a decrease in nitric acid concentration leads to a corresponding decrease in the number of undissociated HNO3 molecules and an increase in the NO₃⁻ ion concentration. At high concentration, 40 mol %, nitric acid is \sim 17% dissociated, resulting in \sim 13 M HNO₃ and $\sim 2.6 \text{ M NO}_3^-$ in the bulk liquid.³¹ At 20 and 16 mol %, the percent dissociation increases to \sim 54% and \sim 62%, respectively, and at a bulk concentration of 10 mol %, nitric acid is largely dissociated (~75%).³⁶ Between 16-20 mol % HNO₃, the NO_3^- concentration increases to ~ 5 M and the molecular HNO_3 concentration decreases to ~ 4 M. By 10 mol %, the concentration of nitrate ion is three times that of the molecular acid. If nitrate ions contribute to the 40 mol % VSFS spectra in Figure 1 through the v_2 overtone, then one would expect the increase in NO₃⁻ concentration with acid dissociation to be reflected in the interfacial spectra as a function of water content.

Figure 3 illustrates the effects of increasing water concentration on the surface adsorption of nitric acid. The nitric acid concentrations are shown in decreasing order from 40 to 10 mol % for ppp-polarization (Figure 3a-d), and from 40 to 16 mol % for sps-polarization (Figure 3e-g). The VSFS spectra show that the overall intensity in both polarizations decreases as water is added. Global fitting results for the ppp-polarization concentration series are shown in Figure 4, in which the peak phases and positions were held constant throughout the series and constrained using the results in Table 1 from the 40 mol % HNO₃ polarization series analysis. Peak widths were held constant to within 2.5% across the series and only the peak amplitudes were allowed to vary. In this way, high quality fits to the data in Figure 4 were obtained. The parameters resulting from this analysis of the ppp concentration series are consistent with those from the polarization series fit in Figure 2, with two resonant features in the NO₂ antisymmetric stretching region at 1690 ± 2 and 1662 ± 2 cm⁻¹, thus providing further confidence to these peak positions.

The results in Figure 4 show that the amplitudes of both features decrease as the nitric acid concentration decreases, contrary to what would be expected if the $\sim \! 1662~{\rm cm}^{-1}$ peak were due to contributions from ${\rm NO_3}^-$ ions. However, the spectral trends are consistent with an assignment of the two resonant features to the antisymmetric ${\rm NO_2}$ stretching vibration of undissociated nitric acid. Therefore, we attribute the spectral features in Figures 1–4 to undissociated HNO₃ adsorbed in the

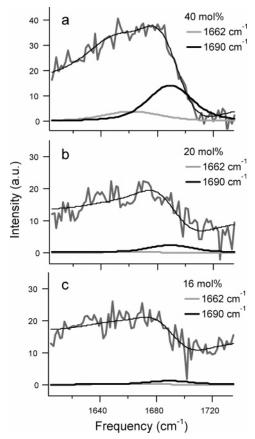


Figure 4. Global fitting of ppp-polarization sum-frequency spectra of HNO₃-H₂O binary solutions at (a) 40 mol %, (b) 20 mol %, and (c) 16 mol %.

top surface layers of HNO_3-H_2O binary solutions. Furthermore, global analyses of the polarization (Figure 2) and concentration (Figure 4) series indicate that two different hydrogen-bonding species of molecular HNO₃ are adsorbed at the binary solution surface. The nature of these species will be discussed further in the Discussion.

As shown in Figure 2, the polarization series analysis reveals an opposite relationship between the amplitudes of the \sim 1690 and $\sim 1662~{\rm cm}^{-1}$ features under ssp- and sps-polarizations. In light of the spectral assignments above, this trend qualitatively suggests different NO2 group orientations for the two molecular nitric acid species at the air/solution surface. The data also show that the surface adsorption of these HNO₃ species is affected by the amount of water present. Figure 4 shows that molecular HNO_3 persists at the surface of solutions with as much as $\sim 60\%$ acid dissociation in the bulk, with the 1690 cm⁻¹ peak at higher frequency dominating the peak at lower frequency throughout the concentration series. As illustrated in eqs 3 and 4, the sumfrequency intensity depends on the number of interfacial molecules, their orientation, and the Raman and IR transition strengths for a given vibrational mode. Because the VSFS intensity decreases for both sps- and ppp-polarizations as the nitric acid concentration is reduced below 40 mol %, this indicates that the decrease in intensity with increasing dilution is not due to a significant change in nitric acid orientation at the surface, but either to a decrease in the number of undissociated HNO₃ molecules in the interfacial region or to a change in the Raman and/or IR transition strengths. The bulk dissociation behavior of HNO₃ supports the conclusion that the decrease in VSFS intensity with nitric acid concentration observed in Figure 3 results from a corresponding decrease in the number of undissociated HNO₃ molecules at the vapor/liquid surface.

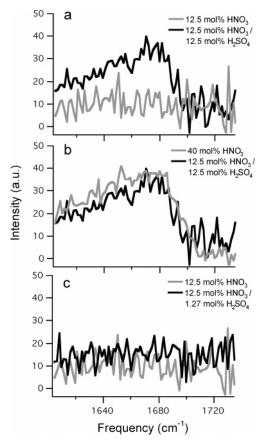


Figure 5. Sum-frequency spectra of the NO₂ antisymmetric stretch in ppp-polarization of HNO₃-H₂SO₄-H₂O ternary solutions at constant HNO₃ concentration compared with HNO₃ binary solutions: (a) 12.5 mol % HNO₃/12.5 mol % H₂SO₄ compared with 12.5 mol % HNO₃; (b) 12.5 mol % HNO₃/12.5 mol % H₂SO₄ compared with 40 mol % HNO₃; (c) 12.5 mol % HNO₃/1.27 mol % H₂SO₄ compared with 12.5 mol % HNO₃.

4.2. VSFS Spectra of Ternary HNO3, H2SO4, and H2O **Solutions.** Figures 5 and 6 show sum-frequency spectra in the NO₂ antisymmetric stretching region of ternary solutions of nitric acid, sulfuric acid, and water. In what follows, only the concentrations of the two acids are specified; the mole fraction of water in these solutions can be determined by subtracting the sum of the acid mole fractions from unity.

In Figure 5, the HNO₃ concentration is held constant at \sim 12.5 mol % in two solutions with either 12.5 or 1.27 mol % H₂SO₄. A ppp-polarization spectrum of the 12.5% HNO₃-12.5% H₂SO₄ ternary solution is shown in Figure 5a. Significant enhancement in signal from undissociated nitric acid is observed in comparison to the spectrum of a binary solution with 12.5 mol % HNO₃, which shows no NO₂ antisymmetric stretching intensity from undissociated nitric acid. The degree of this signal enhancement from undissociated HNO3 at the ternary solution surface is considerable, especially when compared in Figure 5b to the ppp-spectrum of a 40 mol % HNO₃ binary solution, in which the HNO₃ bulk concentration is much greater. The increase in molecular nitric acid signal at the ternary solution surface in Figure 5a demonstrates that nitric and sulfuric acids are interacting in the interfacial region and that H₂SO₄ perturbs the molecular HNO₃ at the surface. However, as shown in Figure 5c, for a ternary mixture with a composition of 12.7 mol % HNO₃ and only 1.27 mol % H₂SO₄, a factor of 10 decrease in the H₂SO₄ concentration does not result in any change in the signal intensity from undissociated nitric acid at the surface.

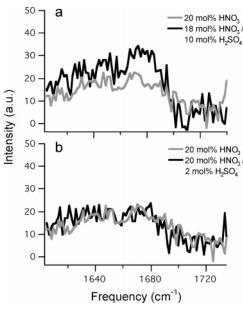


Figure 6. Sum-frequency spectra of the NO₂ antisymmetric stretch in ppp-polarization of HNO₃—H₂SO₄—H₂O ternary solutions at constant 4:1 H₂O:HNO₃ ratio compared with a 20 mol % HNO₃ binary solution: (a) 18 mol % HNO₃/10 mol % H₂SO₄; (b) 20 mol % HNO₃/2 mol % H₂SO₄.

Because the VSFS intensity depends on the number of molecules and their orientation, as well as on the Raman and IR transition strengths, the intensity changes in Figure 5 could be a convolution of these effects. However, Raman studies of HNO₃-H₂SO₄-H₂O mixtures that demonstrate the effects of H₂SO₄ on nitric acid in the bulk can be used to narrow the possibilities.³⁷ Raman spectra of comparable binary and ternary solutions show that although molecular nitric acid bands are barely discernible in a 1:10 HNO₃:H₂O binary solution, they are clearly observed in a ternary mixture with a 1:1:10 HNO₃: H₂SO₄:H₂O molar ratio. These Raman studies indicate that sulfuric acid perturbs the bulk HNO₃/NO₃⁻ equilibrium; they show that as the sulfuric acid concentration decreases, the molecular HNO₃ features in the ternary spectrum decrease while the NO₃⁻ ion bands increase. This shift in the HNO₃ dissociation equilibrium with H₂SO₄ suggests that at the ternary solution surface, the increase in VSFS intensity of the molecular nitric acid signal is due to an enhancement in the adsorption of the undissociated acid rather than to a significant change in molecular orientation or in the Raman cross-section resulting from HNO₃-H₂SO₄ interactions in the interfacial region.

An alternative explanation for the VSFS intensity changes in Figure 5 is a difference in the ratio between water and nitric acid, which could affect the degree of acid dissociation. Although the HNO₃-H₂O solution and HNO₃-H₂SO₄-H₂O solutions in Figure 5 are held at constant nitric acid concentration (\sim 12.5 mol %), the mole ratio of H₂O to HNO₃ is not the same. For example, the H₂O:HNO₃ ratio in the 12.5 mol % binary solution is 7:1, whereas in the 12.7 mol % HNO₃/1.27 mol % H₂SO₄ ternary solution the ratio decreases to 6.75:1, and further decreases to 6:1 in the 12.5 mol % HNO₃/12.5 mol % H₂SO₄ solution. To test this possibility, spectra of binary and ternary solutions with a constant 4:1 H₂O:HNO₃ ratio are compared in Figure 6. As seen in Figure 6a, in comparison to the binary solution with 20 mol % HNO3, the VSFS signal from undissociated HNO₃ is indeed enhanced at the surface of a ternary solution containing 18 mol % HNO3 and 10 mol % H2SO4. However, for a ternary solution with 20 mol % HNO₃ and only 2 mol % H₂SO₄, shown in Figure 6b, there is no significant

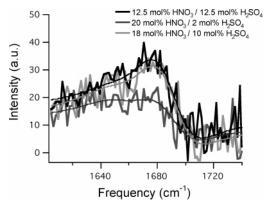


Figure 7. Global fits for ppp-polarization sum-frequency spectra of HNO₃-H₂SO₄ ternary solutions: 12.5 mol % HNO₃/12.5 mol % H₂SO₄, 18 mol % HNO₃/10 mol % H₂SO₄, and 20 mol % HNO₃/2 mol % H₂SO₄.

change in VSFS signal. For reasons presented earlier in the discussion of Figure 5, the spectral intensity effects in Figure 6 are also attributed to changes in the adsorption of undissociated nitric acid in the interfacial region. Thus, both Figures 5a and 6a indicate that an enhancement in molecular HNO₃ at the ternary solution surface results from the addition of ≥ 10 mol % H₂SO₄. However, this enhancement is clearly dependent on the amount of H₂SO₄ present. As shown in Figures 5c and 6b, at low concentrations $\sim 1-2$ mol % H₂SO₄, there is much less impact of sulfuric acid on molecular nitric acid adsorption at the surface.

The VSFS spectra of the ternary solutions at constant mol % (Figure 5a) and at constant H₂O:HNO₃ ratio (Figure 6) were globally fit, as shown in Figure 7. The spectrum of the 20 mol % HNO₃ binary solution was globally fit along with the spectra in Figure 7 as a check for consistency with the binary solution analyses in Figures 2 and 4 (not shown for clarity). Again, consistent with the binary solution results, two different species of molecular nitric acid at the ternary solution surface are identified with peak positions at 1690 ± 2 and 1662 ± 2 cm⁻¹. The fitting shows that the amplitudes of both NO₂ antisymmetric stretching features increase with the addition of H₂SO₄ in the ternary solutions of Figures 5 and 6, relative to the binary HNO₃ solutions, and that the percent increase in amplitude of both features is greater in the mixtures with a higher concentration of H_2SO_4 (10 or 12.5 mol %). Although the 1690 cm⁻¹ feature dominates in the ternary mixtures with either 2 or 10 mol % H₂SO₄ in Figure 6, the fitting also shows that relative to the binary 20 mol % HNO₃ solution, the percent increase in amplitude is greater for the peak at 1662 cm⁻¹ than for the peak at 1690 cm⁻¹.

5. Discussion

5.1. Binary Nitric Acid Mixtures. In bulk aqueous solutions, nitric acid is known to form complexes with water of the general form HNO_3 • $(\text{H}_2\text{O})_n$, where n=1 is the monohydrate, n=2 is the dihydrate, and n=3 is the trihydrate. The relative abundance of these complexes varies with the concentration of the solution. For example, at 40 mol % the most abundant component of the molecular nitric acid population is the monohydrate (\sim 80%), with 8% of the trihydrate species and 12% of the unhydrated monomer. By comparison, at 16 mol %, the mono- and trihydrate species are more comparable in abundance.

Evidence for the monohydrate complex between HNO₃ and H₂O has been reported in microwave studies of gas-phase HNO₃-H₂O clusters,³⁹ infrared studies of solid HNO₃-H₂O

mixtures, 40,41 and infrared studies of low-temperature argon matrices.³⁰ The infrared studies of ice films with a 1:1 ratio of water to nitric acid assign a feature $\sim 1670-1673$ cm⁻¹ to the NO₂ antisymmetric stretch of the monohydrate complex. It is not surprising that this monohydrate frequency is very similar to that found for concentrated bulk aqueous solutions of HNO₃, given that at 40 mol % the monohydrate is the major form of undissociated nitric acid. Microwave experiments³⁹ and ab initio calculations⁴² suggest a quasi-planar ring structure for this monohydrate complex, in which H₂O forms two hydrogen bonds to HNO₃. The primary hydrogen bond occurs between the H atom of nitric acid and the O atom of water with a bond length \sim 1.7 Å. Theoretical calculations suggest that, although not a "good" hydrogen bond because it is long (~2.4 Å) and bent, a second, much weaker interaction between the O atom of the nitro group and an H atom of water may provide additional stability to the complex.⁴²

Interestingly, in the argon-matrix isolation studies the monohydrate is assigned to a feature at 1694 cm⁻¹, much higher than the \sim 1673 cm⁻¹ feature reported in the infrared studies of solid HNO₃-H₂O mixtures. One explanation is the difference in the monohydrate structure suggested by the argon-matrix experiments, which consists of only a single hydrogen bond between the O atom of water and the H atom of HNO3; no evidence is found in the matrix spectra for a second weak interaction between water and the NO₂ group of nitric acid.³⁰ Recent ab initio calculations suggest a nonplanar structure for this singly hydrogen-bonded monohydrate complex, where the hydrogen atoms of water are found out of the plane defined by the HNO₃ molecule.⁴³ The shift in NO₂ antisymmetric stretching frequency for HNO₃ in the gas phase (1710 cm⁻¹), liquid phase (1675 cm⁻¹), and solid phase (1646 cm⁻¹) illustrates that as the association strength of the nitro group increases, the fundamental frequency decreases. 31,32 Thus, a lack (or significant weakening) of interaction to the nitro group in a monohydrate complex would reasonably blue shift the NO2 antisymmetric stretching frequency compared with a monohydrate in which NO₂ group is hydrogen bonded.

Using these experimental and theoretical investigations of HNO₃•H₂O complexes, assignments of the two resonant features in the sum-frequency spectra of HNO₃ solutions are made. We assign the spectral feature at $1690 \pm 2 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ to a monohydrate complex with a single hydrogen bond between water and the acid OH group. The absence of hydrogen bonding between H₂O and the acid NO₂ group indicates that this portion of the undissociated HNO₃ species can protrude out into the vapor phase, thereby placing the 1690 cm⁻¹ complex in the topmost surface layer. The second feature in the VSFS spectrum at $1662 \pm 2 \,\mathrm{cm}^{-1}$ is assigned to a more strongly hydrogen-bonded complex between molecular nitric acid and water. This frequency is between that reported in infrared studies of ice for the monohydrate at 1673 cm⁻¹ and the trihydrate at 1652 cm⁻¹. ^{40,41} Although unambiguous determination of the number of water molecules involved in this surface complex is not possible, the low frequency of the 1662 cm⁻¹ complex suggests hydrogen bonding between both the acid OH and NO₂ groups and at least one water molecule. Given the additional hydrogen bonding interaction to the NO₂ group, this molecular nitric acid species may reside deeper into the interfacial region than the more weakly solvated complex at 1690 cm⁻¹. Figure 8 depicts these two HNO₃•H₂O complexes of undissociated nitric acid observed at the vapor/acid solution interface.

Additional support for this picture is provided by a recent ATR-FTIR spectroscopy study in which signatures of undis-

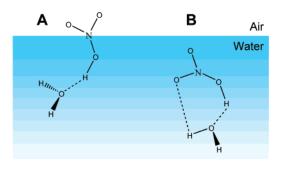


Figure 8. Picture of HNO₃·H₂O complexes at the vapor/HNO₃ solution interface observed in the VSFS spectra: a single hydrogen bond between the oxygen of water and the hydrogen atom of HNO3 (A), and two hydrogen bonds between water and the OH and NO2 groups of HNO₃ (B).

sociated HNO₃ at the surface of concentrated nitric acid solutions were assigned to a monohydrate complex between molecular HNO₃ and H₂O.²² The NO₂ antisymmetric stretching vibration was found at \sim 1673 cm⁻¹, very close to that for bulk solutions of HNO₃. However, no additional absorption near 1690 cm⁻¹ indicative of a weakly bonded surface species was reported in their ATR-FTIR surface spectra. One possible explanation for this difference is that the interface as defined by the ATR-FTIR experiments is inherently deeper than for the sum-frequency experiments. The VSFS studies here provide evidence for the existence of two hydrogen-bonded species of molecular nitric acid at the solution surface. Moreover, these studies are the first to reveal a weakly solvated HNO3 monohydrate complex that is unique to the sum-frequency spectrum and to the top layer of the vapor/liquid interface of the acid solution. Further studies to investigate these solvated surface HNO₃ species are planned with isotopic mixtures. Surface studies of crystalline ice clusters of H₂O and D₂O mixtures show a clear preference for surface HOD molecules to engage in deuterium bonding (over hydrogen bonding) with subsurface molecules. 44,45 Replacing H₂O with D₂O in the HNO₃ binary (and HNO₃/H₂SO₄ ternary) solutions here should produce shifts in the NO₂ antisymmetric stretching frequency consistent with the nitro group hydration environment at the vapor/acid solution interface.

5.2. Ternary Nitric Acid/Sulfuric Acid Mixtures. The VSFS spectra show that the perturbation of molecular HNO₃ adsorption at the ternary solution surface by H₂SO₄ depends on the sulfuric acid concentration. This observation is consistent with reported surface tension measurements of ternary solutions.^{21,46} For example, the surface tension of a ternary solution with 30 wt % HNO₃ and 40 wt % H₂SO₄, comparable to the solution in Figure 4a containing 12.5 mol % (~32 wt %) HNO₃ and 12.5 mol % (\sim 43 wt %) H₂SO₄, is 61.82 dyn cm⁻¹.⁴⁶ This value is similar to the surface tension of a 40 mol % (70 wt %) HNO₃ binary solution with a much higher concentration of nitric acid.²¹ By contrast, the surface tension of a ternary solution with 30 wt % HNO3 and only 5 wt % H2SO4 (comparable to the 12.7 mol % (~32 wt %) HNO₃ and 1.27 mol % (~6 wt %) H₂SO₄ solution in Figure 4b) is 68.15 dyn cm⁻¹.⁴⁶ The surface tension of the ternary mixture with lower H₂SO₄ content is not significantly different from that of a binary mixture with ~12.5 mol % HNO₃.²¹

Because sulfuric acid clearly affects the adsorption of undissociated nitric acid at the ternary solution surface, an important question is the form of H₂SO₄ in these mixtures. Raman and FTIR specular reflectance studies of bulk ternary solutions indicate that the dissociation equilibria of HNO3 and $\rm H_2SO_4$ interfere with each other. 37,47 The degree of dissociation of $\rm HSO_4^-$ is altered by the presence of $\rm HNO_3$ such that the ionization of $\rm HNO_3$ occurs before the ionization of $\rm HSO_4^-$, regardless of the acid concentration ratios; $\rm SO_4^{2-}$ dominates $\rm NO_3^-$ in the competition for protons in solution. 37 This indicates that for the ternary solutions here, sulfuric acid is predominantly in the form of bisulfate as opposed to sulfate.

Recent molecular dynamics simulations suggest that HSO₄⁻, unlike SO₄²⁻, is not strongly repelled from the air/solution interface but shows a similar moderate propensity for the surface as does the chloride ion.48 The effect of sulfuric acid on interfacial water structure has also been examined by VSFS. 49,50 With increasing bulk concentration of sulfuric acid, the signal from water molecules in the top surface layer diminished, implying increased perturbation of the surface water structure.⁴⁹ The results were interpreted on the basis of ion pairing and the formation of acid hydrates at increasing H₂SO₄ concentration. For the ternary solutions with $\geq 10 \text{ mol } \% \text{ H}_2\text{SO}_4$ examined here (Figures 4a and 5a), associations between water and HSO₄⁻ in the interfacial region or molecular hydrate formation (H2-SO₄•(H₂O)_n) would serve to bind water molecules otherwise available at the corresponding HNO₃ binary solution surface. The resulting decrease in the effective H₂O:HNO₃ ratio would inhibit the dissociation of HNO₃ at the surface, and explains the observed enhancement of molecular nitric acid at the ternary solution surfaces with $H_2SO_4 \ge 10$ mol %. This effect of H_2 -SO₄ on the HNO₃ dissociation equilibrium also explains the lack of significant enhancement of molecular nitric acid in solutions with ≤ 2 mol % H_2SO_4 ; fewer HSO_4^- ions in the interfacial region would have a much reduced impact on the number of water molecules able to participate in nitric acid dissociation. Support for this concentration dependent effect of sulfuric acid on nitric acid dissociation at the surface of ternary solutions is provided by bulk Raman studies.³⁷ These studies of HNO₃-H₂SO₄-H₂O mixtures show that as the H₂SO₄ content increases/decreases, the HNO₃/NO₃⁻ ion equilibrium shifts such that the v_3 band of the nitrate ion decreases/increases while the v_1 band of molecular nitric acid increases/decreases in intensity.

6. Conclusions

Molecular HNO₃ has been directly observed in the top surface layers of binary HNO₃-H₂O and ternary HNO₃-H₂SO₄-H₂O solutions using vibrational sum-frequency spectroscopy. Although this result is consistent with predictions from surface tension measurements and other surface spectroscopic studies, 20-22 the conclusions drawn from this work further advance understanding of the hydrogen-bonding character of these undissociated HNO₃ species and their adsorption at vapor/acid solution interfaces. The studies here present the first observation of two different hydrogen-bonded species of undissociated nitric acid at the acid solution surface of both binary and ternary mixtures. Frequencies of the NO₂ antisymmetric stretching mode in the region 1650-1700 cm⁻¹ suggest that both of these species are hydrogen bonded to water. The frequencies of these species also suggest differences in the solvation environment of the acid NO₂ group in the interfacial region. A spectral feature at 1662 ± 2 cm⁻¹ is attributed to a complex between HNO₃ and H₂O with hydrogen bonds to both the acid OH and NO2 groups. By contrast, a second feature at $1690 \pm 2 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ is assigned to a monohydrate complex with a nonbonded NO2 group. Such a weakly bonded molecular HNO₃ complex with water is unique to the sum-frequency experiment and is not observed in the interfacial region as defined by ATR-FTIR experiments. Given

this, and because the NO_2 group of this monohydrate is free to protrude out into the vapor phase, a location in the topmost surface layer of the solution is proposed for this complex. The ternary $HNO_3-H_2SO_4-H_2O$ solution data here show that the adsorption of these two molecular HNO_3 species is enhanced at the surface compared to the binary HNO_3-H_2O solution, but that the enhancement depends on the concentration of sulfuric acid. For H_2SO_4 concentrations ≥ 10 mol %, the presence of undissociated nitric acid is significantly enhanced at the surface, whereas concentrations ≤ 2 mol % have little effect. This H_2 - SO_4 concentration dependent behavior is attributed to HSO_4 - (or H_2SO_4) species at the surface that bind water and interfere with the HNO_3 dissociation equilibrium and adsorption of molecular HNO_3 at the surface.

These results have implications for heterogeneous processes involving nitric and sulfuric acids at aqueous surfaces in the atmosphere, in which reaction kinetics and mechanisms could depend on the HNO₃ composition of the surface. For example, laboratory studies have shown that reactions between gaseous NO and molecular HNO₃ (and not NO₃⁻) adsorbed in thin water films on silica surfaces produce reactive nitrogen species such as NO₂ and HONO that impact tropospheric pollution. ¹² The presence of water on the solid surface was found to be critical. ¹⁴ This suggests that soils, dust particles, and solid surfaces in urban environments that adsorb nitric acid and water can provide sites for HNO₃ reactions with NO. The studies reported here demonstrate the potential role of such reactions involving molecular HNO₃ at liquid aerosol surfaces in the atmosphere.

The conclusions also have clear implications for gaseous uptake and hydrolysis reactions in the troposphere and stratosphere. For example, the hydrolysis of NO₂ at hydrated solid surfaces has been widely studied because it generates HONO, a major source of OH in the troposphere, as well as HNO₃. 10,11,51 A buildup of molecular HNO₃ bound to water at aqueous atmospheric surfaces could have an impact on NO2 uptake and hydrolysis reaction rates. In the stratosphere, the hydrolysis of ClONO₂ and N₂O₅ on aqueous sulfuric acid droplets are important chlorine and NOx processing reactions that also produce nitric acid.52,53 Experiments have shown that the presence of nitric acid dissolved in sulfuric acid decreases both the ClONO₂ and N₂O₅ hydrolysis reaction probabilities.^{53,54} Given the results of the present study, an enhancement in nitric acid—water complexes adsorbed at the surface of ternary HNO₃/ H₂SO₄/H₂O particles could interfere with the gaseous uptake of ClONO₂ and N₂O₅ and cause a reduction in the hydrolysis reaction rates. Because the microscopic composition of HNO₃ at aqueous aerosol surfaces can have a significant influence on gaseous uptake and reactivity, the insight provided here into the adsorption of molecular nitric acid at HNO₃/H₂O and HNO₃/ H₂SO₄/H₂O solution surfaces contributes to our understanding of heterogeneous processes in the atmosphere.

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