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Efficient dehalogenation of polyhalomethanes and production of strong acids in aqueous environments: Water-catalyzed O–H-insertion and HI-elimination reactions of isodiiodomethane (CH$_2$I–I) with water

Wai Ming Kwok, Cunyuan Zhao, a) Xiangguo Guan, Yun-Liang Li, Yong Du, and David Lee Phillips b)

Department of Chemistry, University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong, China

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A combined experimental and theoretical study of the ultraviolet photolysis of CH$_2$I$_2$ in water is reported. Ultraviolet photolysis of low concentrations of CH$_2$I$_2$ in water was experimentally observed to lead to almost complete conversion into CH$_2$(OH)$_2$ and 2HI products. Picosecond time-resolved resonance Raman spectroscopy experiments in mixed water/acetonitrile solvents (25%–75% water) showed that appreciable amounts of isodiiodomethane (CH$_2$I–I) were formed within several picoseconds and the decay of the CH$_2$I–I species became substantially shorter with increasing water concentration, suggesting that CH$_2$I–I may be reacting with water. Ab initio calculations demonstrate the CH$_2$I–I species is able to react readily with water via a water-catalyzed O–H-insertion and HI-elimination reaction followed by its CH$_2$I(OH) product undergoing a further water-catalyzed HI-elimination reaction to make a H$_2$C═O product. These HI-elimination reactions produce the two HI leaving groups observed experimentally and the H$_2$C═O product further reacts with water to produce the other final CH$_2$(OH)$_2$ product observed in the photochemistry experiments. These results suggest that CH$_2$I–I is the species that reacts with water to produce the CH$_2$(OH)$_2$ and 2HI products seen in the photochemistry experiments. The present study demonstrates that ultraviolet photolysis of CH$_2$I$_2$ at low concentration leads to efficient dehalogenation and release of multiple strong acid (HI) leaving groups. Some possible ramifications for the decomposition of polyhalomethanes and halomethanols in aqueous environments as well as the photochemistry of polyhalomethanes in the natural environment are briefly discussed. © 2004 American Institute of Physics. [DOI: 10.1063/1.1701699]

I. INTRODUCTION

The photochemistry and chemistry of polyhalomethanes have been of interest in atmospheric chemistry, environmental chemistry, synthetic chemistry, and chemical reaction dynamics. Polyhalomethanes such as CH$_2$I$_2$, CH$_2$BrI, CHBr$_3$, CCl$_4$, CFCl$_3$, and others have been observed in the atmosphere and are thought to be important sources of reactive halogens in the atmosphere.1–8 The photochemistry of CH$_2$I$_2$ and CH$_2$BrI was recently linked to the formation of IO produced during localized ozone-depletion events in the marine boundary layer of the troposphere.7,8 Both gas-phase and condensed-phase photochemistry and chemistry are recognized to be important for properly describing reaction processes in the atmosphere.9–21 There has recently been much interest in reactions associated with the activation of halogens in aqueous sea-salt particles.10–21 Polyhalomethanes like CH$_2$I$_2$ have also been used as reagents for cyclopropanation of olefins and diiodomethylation of carbonyl compounds.22–41 Examples include cyclopropanation of olefins by ultraviolet photolysis of CH$_2$I$_2$ in the presence of the olefins23,32,33,35 or via Simmons–Smith-type reagents.22,28–30,41 Polyhalomethane molecules are also attractive to study fundamental photodissociation processes in chemical reaction dynamics.42–69

Gas-phase ultraviolet photolysis of polyhalomethanes generally leads to one direct carbon–halogen bond cleavage.42–58 Time-of-flight photofragment spectroscopy results indicate that the polyatomic photofragment typically receives a large amount of excitation of its internal degrees of freedom (vibration and rotation).44,47–51 Gas- and solution-phase resonance Raman experiments for several polyhalomethanes showed that photodissociation typically had a noticeable multidimensional character and Franck–Condon region dynamics qualitatively consistent with a semirigid radical description of the dissociation process.59–69

Ultraviolet excitation of polyhalomethanes in condensed phases leads to photoproducts with characteristic transient absorption bands in the ultraviolet and visible regions which were assigned to a number of different species.70–82 Femtosecond transient absorption measurements showed that these photoproducts are mainly formed by geminate recombination of the photofragments within the solvent cage.77–82 Maier and co-workers first assigned the isodiiodomethane (CH$_2$I–I) photoprocess as the one responsible for these intense transient absorption spectra based on IR vibrational frequencies observed in low-temperature matrices and a comparison to ab initio frequencies.73,74 Tarnovsky et al.79

a) Permanent address: Department of Chemistry, Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou 730070, China.
b) Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.
observed similar transient absorption spectra in room-
temperature solutions and assigned these bands to be due to
the CH$_2$I–I photoproduct. This was subsequently confirmed
by time-resolved resonance Raman (TR$^3$) experiments.$^{35,88}$ A
number of isopolyhalomethane photoproducts have been ob-
erved after ultraviolet excitation of polyhalomethanes in
condensed-phase environments.$^{73,74,77–92}$

We explored the chemical reactivity of isopoly-
halomethanes towards olefins theoretically and experi-
mentally.$^{87,89,93–98}$ Density functional theory (DFT) calcula-
tions revealed that the CH$_2$I–I species can readily react with
ethylene to produce a cyclopropane product and I$_2$ leaving
with a barrier of only 2.9 kcal/mol, but the CH$_2$I radic-
cal and CH$_2$I$^+$ cations have much more difficult pathways
to make cyclopropanated products.$^{93,94}$ TR$^3$ experiments
showed that CH$_2$I–I reacts with cyclohexene on the 5–10-ns
time scale to make an I$_2$ leaving group that immediately
complexes with the solvent to make an I$_2$:cyclohexene
complex$^{95}$ under conditions similar to those that observed
significant formation of the cyclopropanated product of cy-
clohexene (norcarane) after ultraviolet photolysis of
CH$_2$I$_2$. These experimental and theoretical results indi-
cated that CH$_2$I–I is the carbenoid species mostly respon-
sible for the cyclopropanation of olefins when the ultraviolet
photolysis of CH$_2$I$_2$ method is used and a reaction mecha-
nism was proposed.$^{93–95}$ Other isopolyhalomethanes were
found to also behave as carbenoids with varying reactivity to
olefins.$^{87,89,94,97}$ The chemical reactivity of CH$_2$I–I was ob-
served to be similar to that of singlet methylene towards
solvent-catalyzed CH$_2$(OH)$_2$ and 2HI products. Pi-
osecond time-resolved resonance Raman (ps-TR$^3$) spec-
troscopy experiments in mixed water/acetonitrile solvents
(25%–75% water) observed that isodiiodomethane (CH$_2$I–I)
was formed within several picoseconds. The decay of the
CH$_2$I–I species became significantly faster with increasing
water concentration and could be indicative of CH$_2$I–I react-
ing with water. \textit{Ab initio} calculations showed that CH$_2$I–I
reacts easily with water via a water-catalyzed O–H-insertion
and HI-elimination reaction followed by the CH$_2$I(OH)$_2$
product undergoing a further water-catalyzed HI-elimination re-
action to make an H$_2$CO$^-$ product that reacts with water to
produce the final products experimentally observed. These
indicate that CH$_2$I–I is the species that reacts with water to
produce the CH$_2$(OH)$_2$ and 2HI products observed experi-
mentally. We briefly discuss some implications for the pho-
tochemistry of polyhalomethanes in aqueous environments.

\section*{II. EXPERIMENTAL AND COMPUTATIONAL DETAILS}

\subsection*{A. Photochemistry experiments}

Sample solutions were prepared using commercially
available CH$_2$I$_2$ (99%),$^{13}$CH$_2$I$_2$, formaldehyde in water (re-
agent grade), D$_2$O 99.9% D, and de-ionized water. Samples
of about 1 \times 10^{-4} Mol CH$_2$I$_2$ in water were housed in a
10-cm-path-length glass holder with quartz windows. The
sample solution was excited by an about 3-mJ 266-nm unfo-
cussed laser beam from the fourth harmonic of a Nd:YAG
laser in the laser photolysis experiments. The sample was
excited by a Hg lamp placed about 5 cm from the quartz
window of the sample holder with a 280-nm-long pass filter
inserted between the Hg lamp and the quartz window to pre-
vent excitation by high-energy photons in the lamp photoly-
sis experiments. The absorption spectra for the photolyzed
samples were obtained using a 1-cm UV grade cell and a
Perkin Elmer Lambda 19 UV/VIS spectrometer. The pH of
the photolyzed samples was monitored using an THERMO
Orion 420A pH meter equipped with a 8102RN combination
pH electrode that was calibrated with 7.00-pH and 4.01-pH
buffer solutions. Both $^{13}$C and $^1$H NMR spectra were ob-
tained using a Bruker Advance 400 DPX spectrometer and
$\phi=5$ mm sample tubes at room temperature. The $^{13}$CH$_2$I$_2
concentration was \approx 1.2 mM in D$_2$O and the chemical shifts
were referenced to the TMS signal (set as 0 ppm). IR spectra
were acquired using a Bio-rad FTS 165 spectrometer using
\approx20-\mu m sample thickness and CaF$_2$ windows for the sample
holder. Spectra were obtained for the sample in H$_2$O solvent,
the H$_2$O solvent, and a base-line background. The H$_2$O sol-
vent spectrum and the base-line background spectrum were
subtracted from the sample in H$_2$O spectrum in order to find
the resulting sample spectrum.

\subsection*{B. Picosecond time-resolved resonance Raman
(ps-TR$^3$) spectroscopy experiments}

A femtosecond mode-locked Ti:sapphire laser (Spectra-
Physics, Tsunami) pumped by the second harmonic of a
Nd:YVO4 laser (Spectra-Physics, Millennia V) was used as the
seed laser for an amplified laser system composed of a
picosecond regenerative amplifier (Spectra-Physics, Spitfire)
pumped by the second harmonic of a Nd:YLF laser (Spectra-
Physics, Evolution X). The output from the regenerative am
plifier system (800 nm, 1 ps, 1 kHz) was frequency doubled and tripled by KDP crystals to make the probe (400 nm) and pump (267 nm) laser beams. The time zero delays between the pump and probe laser beams were obtained by employing fluorescence depletion of trans-stilbene. The optical delay between the pump and probe beams was varied to a position where the depletion of the stilbene fluorescence was halfway to the maximum fluorescence depletion by the probe laser. The time zero measured between the pump and probe beams had an estimated accuracy of ±0.5 ps and a typical cross correlation of about 1.5 ps [full width at half maximum (FWHM)]. In order to use the laser beams more effectively and noting that the rotational reorientation dynamics are much faster than the dynamics examined in this investigation, parallel polarization of the pump and probe laser beams was used in the ps-TRR experiments rather than the magic angle polarization. The pump and probe beams were tightly focused onto a thin-film stream (∼500 µm thick) of the sample solution. Typical pulse energies and spot sizes at the sample were 15 µJ and 250 µm for the pump beam and 8 µJ and 150 µm for the probe beam. An ellipsoidal mirror with f/1.4 and a backscattering geometry was used to acquire the Raman scattered light from the sample and image the light through the entrance slit of a 0.5-m spectrograph. A 1200-groove/mm-ruled grating blazed at 250 nm in the spectrograph dispersed the Raman light onto a liquid-nitrogen-cooled charge-coupled-device (CCD) detector.

Each spectrum presented here was found from subtraction of a scaled probe-before-pump and scaled net solvent measurements from a pump–probe-spectrum so as to subtract out the CH2I2 ground-state Raman bands and residual solvent Raman bands, respectively. The known Raman shifts of the solvent Raman bands were used to calibrate the spectra with an estimated uncertainty of ±5 cm⁻¹ in absolute frequency. Commercially available 99% CH2I2 and spectroscopic grade acetonitrile solvent were used as is to produce solvent Raman bands, respectively. The known Raman shifts of the solvent Raman bands in the 280–320-nm region decrease in intensity as a new absorption band due to I⁻ appears at about 220 nm with a clear isobestic point at 253 nm. The I⁻ absorption band is essentially identical to that found for KI salt dissolved in water (not shown).

C. Ab initio calculations

The MP2 method was employed to examine the CH2I–I+nH2O (where n = 0,1,2,3) and CH2I(OH)+nH2O (where n = 0,1,2,3,4,5) reactions. Both the geometry optimization and frequency calculations (analytically) were done with the 6-31G** basis set for all C, H, and O atoms and the 6-311G** basis set for iodide atoms. The frequency calculations for the reaction system of CH2I–I+3H2O were performed numerically due to limited computer resources. All calculations made use of the GAUSSIAN 98 program suite. IRC calculations were done to confirm the transition states connected the appropriate reactants and products. The Cartesian coordinates, total energies, and vibrational zero-point energies for the calculated structures are provided in the supporting information (see Ref. 115).

Figure 1 displays ultraviolet and visible spectra obtained following varying times for 266-nm laser photolysis (a) and Hg lamp excitation with wavelengths >280 nm (b) of 1×10⁻⁴ mol CH2I2 in water solution. Inspection of Fig. 1 shows that the absorption bands due to CH2I2 in the 280–300-nm region decrease in intensity while those due to the I⁻ ion in the 220-nm region increase in intensity as the time for photolysis increases. There is a clear isobestic point at about 253 nm, and this indicates the I⁻ is directly produced from the CH2I2 parent molecule. We measured the molar absorption extinction coefficients for CH2I2 and I⁻ in water and found them to be ε288 nm = 1129 cm⁻¹ mol⁻¹ and ε226 nm = 13 240 cm⁻¹ mol⁻¹, respectively. The pH of the sample solution was measured for each of the UV–VIS spectra acquired during the photochemistry experiments shown in Fig. 1 in order to check for any correlation of the pH changes with photolysis of CH2I2. The measured molar absorption extinction coefficients for CH2I2 and I⁻ were used to find the concentrations of these species for each of the photolysis times from the UV–VIS spectra shown in Fig. 1. Plots of Δ[I⁻] versus −Δ[CH2I2] were produced and are shown in

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. CH2I2 ultraviolet photolysis in water and product analysis

Figure 1 displays ultraviolet and visible spectra obtained following varying times for 266-nm laser photolysis (a) and Hg lamp excitation with wavelengths >280 nm (b) of 1×10⁻⁴ mol CH2I2 in water solution. Inspection of Fig. 1 shows that the absorption bands due to CH2I2 in the 280–300-nm region decrease in intensity while those due to the I⁻ ion in the 220-nm region increase in intensity as the time for photolysis increases. There is a clear isobestic point at about 253 nm, and this indicates the I⁻ is directly produced from the CH2I2 parent molecule. We measured the molar absorption extinction coefficients for CH2I2 and I⁻ in water and found them to be ε288 nm = 1129 cm⁻¹ mol⁻¹ and ε226 nm = 13 240 cm⁻¹ mol⁻¹, respectively. The pH of the sample solution was measured for each of the UV–VIS spectra acquired during the photochemistry experiments shown in Fig. 1 in order to check for any correlation of the pH changes with photolysis of CH2I2. The measured molar absorption extinction coefficients for CH2I2 and I⁻ were used to find the concentrations of these species for each of the photolysis times from the UV–VIS spectra shown in Fig. 1. Plots of Δ[I⁻] versus −Δ[CH2I2] were produced and are shown in
two I2 concentration releases two H atoms and two HI products that immediately dissociate to two H+ and two I− products. Plots of the changes in the [H+] concentrations derived from the pH measurements were plotted versus the changes in the [I−] concentrations and these are shown in (b) and (d) of Fig. 2. The plots of Δ[H+] vs Δ[I−] show an excellent linear correlation and a slope of about 1 in both cases. These results for the UV–VIS and pH photochemistry experiments shown in Figs. 1 and 2 indicate that ultraviolet photolysis of CH2I2 in water at low concentration releases two H+ and two I− products (e.g., two HI products that immediately dissociate to two H+ and two I− in water solvent).

In order to learn more about the fate of the carbon atom from the CH2I2 parent molecule following 266-nm photolysis, we next used a carbon-13-labeled sample of CH2I2. We then repeated the 266-nm photolysis experiments and obtained 13C-NMR spectra before, during, and after complete photolysis of 13CH2I2 in D2O solvent as shown in Figs. 3(a)–3(c). Inspection of Fig. 3 shows that before photolysis there is only the parent 13CH2I2 band at about ~63.9 ppm relative to the TMS reference band ~0 ppm [Fig. 3(a)]. During photolysis, this parent 13CH2I2 band decreases in intensity and a new photoproduct band [see Fig. 3(b)] appears at about 82.5 ppm. After complete photolysis (e.g., the UV–VIS spectrum shows that the CH2I2 parent absorption bands have been converted into the I− absorption band), the parent 13CH2I2 band has disappeared and only the photoproduct band at about 82.5 ppm is left. The characteristic 82.5-ppm 13C-NMR band associated with the photoproduct produced after 13CH2I2 photolysis in D2O is in agreement with that reported in the literature for CH2(OH)2 in aqueous solution taking into account the different reference molecules used in the 13C-NMR experiments.116 We tentatively assign the 82.5-ppm 13C-NMR band associated with the photoproduct produced after 13CH2I2 photolysis in D2O to a 13CH2(OD)2 photoproduct. 1H-NMR spectra were also obtained under similar conditions as the 13C-NMR experiments (see Fig. S1 in Ref. 115) and provide further evidence for the 13CH2(OD)2 photoproduct being produced after ultraviolet photolysis of 13CH2I2 in D2O solvent.116 Similar results were found using excitation by the Hg lamp with wavelengths >280 nm. Authentic samples of CH2(OH)2 can be easily made by dissolving a small amount of formaldehyde in water.116–119 We obtained IR spectra of a small amount of formaldehyde in water and this is shown in Fig. 3(d). We then obtained IR spectra before and after 266-nm photolysis of CH2I2 in water and obtained a difference spectrum of the photoproduct produced and this is shown in Fig. 3(e). This spectrum is essentially identical to that obtained for CH2(OH)2 produced by dissolving formalde-
hyde in water. The results of Figs. 3(d) and 3(e) confirm that a CH$_2$(OH)$_2$ product is produced following ultraviolet photolysis of CH$_2$I$_2$ in water and this is consistent with the NMR photochemistry experiments shown in Fig. 3 and S1 that also observed the $^{13}$C-NMR and $^1$H-NMR spectra of a $^{13}$CH$_2$(OD)$_2$ photoproduct.

Combining the preceding experimental photochemistry results indicates that ultraviolet photolysis of CH$_2$I$_2$ at low concentration in water leads to the following overall reaction:

$$\text{CH}_2\text{I}_2 + h\nu + n\text{H}_2\text{O} \rightarrow \text{CH}_2(\text{OH})_2 + 2\text{HI} + (n-2)\text{H}_2\text{O}. \quad (1)$$

The experimental results shown in Figs. 1–3 also indicate that this reaction can convert almost all of the parent CH$_2$I$_2$ compound under low-concentration conditions into CH$_2$(OH)$_2$ and 2HI products with no other discernible reaction products. We made measurements to estimate the photoquantum yield for reaction (1) and found a value of about 0.35±0.1 (see supporting information for a description of the photoquantum yield measurement).\textsuperscript{115}

It is important to note that the photochemistry experiments done with an unfocused nanosecond laser beam and a Hg lamp source of light gave essentially the same results for the production of the photoproducts for low concentrations of CH$_2$I$_2$ in water. This indicates that the photoproducts observed are due to a single-photon process. We also note that essentially the same results were obtained when the concentrations were varied from 0.5×10$^{-4}$ to 2×10$^{-4}$ mol (see Fig. S2 in the supporting information).\textsuperscript{115} Although the concentration could not be varied much due to a combination of the low solubility of CH$_2$I$_2$ in water and the ability to obtain clear absorption spectra, there does not appear to be any concentration effects on the photochemistry at low concentrations <2×10$^{-4}$ mol. We note that previous photochemistry experiments on other polyhalomethanes like CHCl$_2$Br, CHBr$_2$Cl, and CHBr$_3$ also found that Hg lamp excitation (mainly 253.7 nm in these experiments) at low concentrations (<10$^{-6}$ mol) in water led to complete conversion of the organic halogen present in the polyhalomethanes into their halide ions (Cl$^-$ and/or Br$^-$) with a photoquantum yield of about 0.43.\textsuperscript{120} Our present results for CH$_2$I$_2$ at relatively low concentrations are consistent with these previous results for both the conversion of the organic halogens into their halide ions with an appreciable quantum yield via a one-photon process. These results for CH$_2$I$_2$, CHCl$_2$Br, CHBr$_2$Cl, and CHBr$_3$ suggest that it may be common for ultraviolet excitation of many polyhalomethanes at low concentrations in water to be converted quantitatively into halide ions.

We do note that at higher concentrations of CH$_2$I$_2$ in water/acetonitrile or acetonitrile solutions one easily observes absorption bands due to I$_2^-$ and I$_3^-$ secondary products formed from I$^-$ and I products produced from different molecules in the solution (presumably via diffusion controlled reactions). For example, 266-nm photolysis of about 10$^{-2}$ mol CH$_2$I$_2$ in acetonitrile was found to produce absorption bands due to I$^-$, I$_2^-$, and I$_3^-$ on the microsecond time scale (see Fig. 4 of Ref. 121).\textsuperscript{121} At low concentrations the initially formed CH$_2$I and I radical fragments appear to be mainly scavenged by the radical from the same parent molecule and there is little scavenging by radicals from other parent molecules because the parent molecules are very far apart from one another. This would lead mostly to formation of either the very reactive isomer species that undergoes reaction with water to produce the halide ions or the parent molecule. This is consistent with the nearly quantitative con-
version of organic halogens in CH₂I₂, CHCl₂Br, CHBr₂Cl, and CHBr₃ observed here and in Ref. 120 following ultraviolet excitation of low concentrations of polyhalomethanes in water. However, at high concentrations there is appreciable scavenging by either the initial photoproducts or reaction products derived from other parent molecules since the parent molecules are much closer to one another. Thus the initial fragments and/or reaction products are more likely to be scavenged by partners originally from other parent molecules at high concentrations and form products like I₂, CH₂I₂I, I₂⁻I⁻ that are not formed in appreciable amounts at low concentrations of parent molecules.

What species produced by the ultraviolet photolysis of CH₂I₂ in aqueous solutions can lead to efficient reaction(s) to produce CH₂(OH)₂ and 2HI products? We recently observed that photolysis of CH₂I₂ in largely aqueous solutions leads to appreciable formation of CH₂I–I photoproduct with the lifetime of CH₂I–I becoming substantially shorter in mixed aqueous solvents as the amount of O–H bonds present in the solvent system increases.¹¹¹ This suggests that the CH₂I–I photoprodut could be reacting with the O–H bonds of the solvent molecules. We have continued to investigate the chemical reactivity of CH₂I–I towards water as detailed in the next two sections.

B. Picosecond time-resolved resonance
Raman experiments

Since our previous ps-TR³ studies of CH₂I₂ in largely aqueous solvents¹¹¹ did not explicitly vary the concentration of water to determine its effect on the lifetime of the isodiiodomethane (CH₂I–I) species, we have done this in our present study. Figure 4 presents ps-TR³ spectra obtained for the photoproducts produced after 267-nm photolysis of CH₂I₂ in water/acetonitrile mixed solvents with water concentrations of 25%, 50%, and 75% using a 400-nm probe wavelength. The spectra obtained in the 50% water/50% acetonitrile solvent system is in excellent agreement with the ones previously found in Ref. 111. The Raman bands observed in Fig. 4 are readily assigned to the CH₂I–I species as discussed previously in Refs. 85, 88, and 111. Examination of Fig. 4 reveals that the CH₂I–I photoprodut appear within several picoseconds and then decay on the hundreds of picosecond to ns time scale. The Raman band near 715 cm⁻¹ assigned to the fundamental nominal C–I stretch mode (ν₃) was integrated at different time delays so as to inspect the kinetics of the growth and decay of the CH₂I–I species. Figure 5 show plots of the relative integrated area of the ν₃ Raman band from 0 to 6000 ps in the water/acetonitrile mixed solvents. The relative integrated areas of the ν₃ Raman bands were fit to a simple function (the solid, dashed, and dotted lines in Fig. 6 represent these fits):

\[
I(t) = Ae^{-t/t₁} - Be^{-t/t₂},
\]

where \(I(t)\) is the relative integrated area of the ν₃ Raman band, \(t\) is the time, \(t₁\) is the decay time constant of the ν₃ Raman band, \(t₂\) is the growth time constant of the ν₃ Raman band, and \(A\) and \(B\) are constants. The fits to the data in Fig. 5 found that the CH₂I–I photoprodut had time constants \((t₂)\) of 8, 6, and 4 ps for its growth and \((t₁)\) of 4640, 1860, and 680 ps for its decay in the mixed solvents with water concentrations of 25%, 50%, and 75%, respectively. The CH₂I–I Raman bands decay with the lifetime decreasing significantly as the water concentration increases, suggesting CH₂I–I may be reacting with the water molecules.

A recently reported study found the CH₂I–I species decays with a rate constant of \(4.3 \times 10^{6} \text{ s}^{-1}\) in pure acetonitrile solvent.¹²¹ This decay was attributed to CH₂I–I decomposing into a CH₂ radical and I atom accompanied by some

![FIG. 4. Stokes ps-TR³ spectra obtained following 267-nm photolysis of CH₂I₂ in acetonitrile/water mixed solvents using a 400-nm probe excitation wavelength. Spectra in (a), (b), and (c) were obtained in 25%, 50%, and 75% water, respectively. Spectra were acquired at varying pump and probe time delays as indicated to the right of each spectrum. Assignments are indicated for some of the larger isodiiodomethane (CH₂I–I) Raman bands. See Refs. 85, 88, and 111 for details of the Raman band assignments to isodiiodomethane (CH₂I–I).](image)

![FIG. 5. Plots of the relative integrated area of the ν₃ Raman band of CH₂I–I at different delay times (from 0 ps to 6000 ps) obtained in 25% water/75% acetonitrile (open circles), 50% water/50% acetonitrile (solid triangles), and 75% water (solid squares) solvents, respectively. The solid line (25% water/75% acetonitrile), dashed line (50% water/50% acetonitrile), and dotted line (75% water/25% acetonitrile) represents least-squares fits to the data (see text for more details).](image)
decay into I$^-$ product.¹²¹ The rate of decay of CH$_2$I–I in the presence of water (25%–75% in the spectra shown in Fig. 4) is almost two to three orders of magnitude faster than in pure acetonitrile solvent and appears more consistent with a reaction with water molecules than a change in solvent properties like the dielectric constant.¹²¹ Some indirect support for this comes from the fact that the decay of CH$_2$I–I in pure methanol $k = (1.3 \times 10^8$ s$^{-1}$) was found to be more than two orders of magnitude faster¹²¹ than in pure acetonitrile ($k = 4.3 \times 10^8$ s$^{-1}$) even though the dielectric constants of these solvents are similar (33.1 for methanol and 38.8 for acetonitrile at 20 °C). It is interesting that the decay of CH$_2$I–I in methanol ($k = 1.3 \times 10^8$ s$^{-1}$) is similar to that for 25%–50% water in acetonitrile solvent that had measured time constant of 4640–1860 ps and corresponding rate constants of $k = 2.2 \times 10^8$ and $5.4 \times 10^8$ s$^{-1}$, respectively. This similarity would be consistent with the CH$_2$I–I species undergoing O–H-insertion reactions with the O–H bond of methanol and the O–H bonds of water, while there is no possible O–H-insertion reaction for the acetonitrile solvent. This would help explain why the decomposition of CH$_2$I–I is much slower in acetonitrile solvent than in pure methanol or mixed water/acetonitrile solvents.

The hypothesis that CH$_2$I–I reacts with the O–H bonds of water and alcohols is consistent with the carbene behavior of isodiodomethane (CH$_2$I–I) and other isopolyhalomethanes as shown towards carbon double bonds to make cyclopropanated products.⁸⁷,⁹⁰–⁹⁵,⁹⁷ The chemical reactivity of CH$_2$I–I is similar to that of singlet methylene towards C=C bonds in making cyclopropanated products with high stereospecificity and little C–H-insertion products.⁹³,⁹⁹,¹⁰⁰ Carbene and carbinkids like singlet methylene¹⁰¹–¹⁰⁴,¹⁰⁶–¹⁰⁸ and dichlorocarbene (:CCl$_2$)¹⁰⁹,¹¹⁰ can react with O–H bonds of water to produce CH$_2$OH and CHCl$_2$OH products and can also react with O–H bonds in alcohols.¹⁰¹–¹¹⁰ This and the recent direct observation of the isobromofom O–H-insertion reaction with water to produce a CHBr$_2$OH reaction product¹¹² indicates that CH$_2$I–I would likely also undergo a similar O–H-insertion reaction with water and methanol in so far as CH$_2$I–I has a chemical reactivity similar to isobromofom and other carbeneoid species. We have done further work on the O–H-insertion reaction of CH$_2$I–I with water and the fate of its reaction product CH$_2$IOH by examining their reactions as a function of water molecules explicitly included in the reaction system and these results are presented in the next section.

C. Ab initio calculations for the reactions of CH$_2$I–I + nH$_2$O (where n = 1,2,3) and CH$_2$I(OH) + nH$_2$O (where n = 0,1,2,3,4): Building water-catalyzed reactions one molecule at a time

Figures 6 and 7 present the optimized geometry with selected bond length and bond angle parameters and Fig. 8 presents schematic diagrams of the relative energy profiles (in kcal/mol) obtained from MP2 calculations (using the 6-31G* basis set for all C, H, and O atoms and the 6-311G** basis set for iodide atoms) for the reactants, reactant complexes, transition states, product complexes, and products for the reactions of CH$_2$I–I + nH$_2$O (where n = 1,2,3) and CH$_2$I(OH) + nH$_2$O (where n = 0,1,2,3,4).

1. Reactions of CH$_2$I–I + nH$_2$O (where n = 0,1,2,3)

Figure 6 shows that there are some systematic trends in the structures of the reactant complexes (RCs) and transition states (TSs) as the number of H$_2$O molecules involved in the CH$_2$I–I + nH$_2$O (where n = 0,1,2,3) reaction increases. The C–I bond length decreases (from 1.979 Å in RC1 to 1.973 in RC3), the I–I bond length increases (from 3.058 Å in RC1 to 3.088 Å in RC3), and the O·→H–C distance decreases (from 2.441 Å in RC1 to 2.070 Å in RC3) in the RCs as the number of H$_2$O molecules increases. Similarly, the C–I bond length decreases from 1.968 Å in TS1 to 1.954 Å in TS3, the I–I bond length decreases from 3.368 Å in TS1 to 3.234 Å in TS3 and the O·→H–C distance increases from 2.321 (2.386) Å in TS1 to 2.432 Å in TS3. The I–I–C angle increases from 95.5° in TS1 to 117.1° in TS3 and the C–O bond length increases from 2.111 Å in TS1 to 2.386 Å in TS3. These changes in the RC and TS structures as the number of H$_2$O molecules increases can be largely attributed to solvation of the terminal I atom with more hydrogen-bonding-like interactions while also interacting with the CH$_2$I group of the CH$_2$I–I species via the O·→H–C interaction.

The changes in structure in Fig. 6 occurring as the RCs proceed to the TSs indicate that the C–I bond becomes modestly stronger, the I–I bond noticeably weaker, and the C–O bond becomes partially formed. These changes are accompanied by the I·→H interactions becoming somewhat stronger, which is consistent with some H–I bond formation. The changes observed as the RCs go to the TSs are consistent with an O–H-insertion and HI-elimination reaction taking place to form the CH$_2$OH product and an HI leaving group. This was confirmed by IRC calculations and vibrational frequencies for the reaction coordinate were found to be 396i, 319i., and 151i cm$^{-1}$, respectively, for TS1, TS2, and TS3. Examination of Fig. 8 reveals that as the number of H$_2$O molecules is increased, the degree of stabilization appears somewhat greater for the corresponding transition states and this leads to systematically lower barriers for reaction from the reactant complexes to the transition states: 13.6 kcal/mol from RC1 to TS1, 10.3 kcal/mol for RC2 to TS2, and 3.8 kcal/mol for RC3 to TS3. These results indicate that additional H$_2$O molecules substantially catalyze the CH$_2$I–I + nH$_2$O→CH$_2$I(OH) + HI + (n–1)H$_2$O (n = 1,2,3) reaction. As the RCs proceed to the TSs, the I–I–C angle, I–I bond length, and C–O bond formation experience smaller changes as the number of H$_2$O molecules increases. For example, the I–I–C angle undergoes a change of 18° from RC1 to TS2, 13.6° from RC2 to TS2, and only 2.2° from RC3 to TS3. Similarly, the I–I bond length exhibits a change of 0.31 Å from RC1 to TS1, 0.23 Å from RC2 to TS2, and 0.146 Å from RC3 to TS3. The C–O bond formation is weaker (C–O bond lengths of 2.111 Å for TS1, 2.193 Å for TS2, and 2.386 Å for TS3. These changes in the I–I–C bond angle, I–I bond length, and C–O bond formation all suggest less energy is needed to go from the RCs to their TSs as more H$_2$O molecules are added. This is consistent with the
lower barriers to reaction observed (from 13.6 kcal/mol for RC1 to TS1 to only 3.8 kcal/mol from RC3 to TS3) as more H$_2$O molecules are involved in the reaction.

2. Reactions of CH$_2$I(OH) + nH$_2$O (where n = 0,1,2,3,4)

Inspection of Fig. 7 reveals that as the number of H$_2$O molecules increases in the reactant complexes, the O···H bond formed between a H$_2$O molecule and the H–O moiety of the CH$_2$I(OH) molecule decreases from 1.807 Å for RC5 to 1.724 Å for RC6 to 1.647 Å for RC7 and then to 1.598 Å for RC8. This is accompanied by the bond of the H–O moiety of the CH$_2$I(OH) molecule increase from 0.989 Å for RC5 to 1.001 Å for RC6 to 1.010 Å for RC7 and then to 1.020 Å for RC8. These results indicate that increasing the number of H$_2$O molecules systematically increases the strength of the hydrogen bonding to the H–O moiety of the CH$_2$I(OH) molecule with water and weakens the strength of the H–O bond of the CH$_2$I(OH) molecule. In the transition state structures, the C–I bond length decreases from 3.032 Å in TS4 to 2.634 Å in TS8 and the O–C–I angle increases from 103.7° in TS5 to 111.6° in TS8. These changes in the TS structures can also be attributed to the solvation of the I atom with more hydrogen-bonding-like interactions while also interacting with the CH$_2$ group of the CH$_2$I(OH) molecule via the O···H–C interaction.

The changes in structure in Fig. 7 occurring as the RCs proceed to the TSs indicate that the C–I bond becomes weaker, the O···H bond becomes partially formed in the O···H–O–C moiety of the CH$_2$I(OH) molecule, and the I···H interactions generally become somewhat stronger, which is consistent with some H–I bond formation and with a HI-elimination reaction occurring to form an CH$_2$O product and an HI leaving group. This was confirmed by IRC calculations and vibrational frequencies for the reaction coordinate were found to be 551, 501, 570, 407, and 399 i cm$^{-1}$, respectively, for TS4, TS5, TS6, TS7, and TS8. Examination of Fig. 8 shows the degree of stabilization appears greater for the corresponding transition states and this results in systematically lower barriers for reaction from the RCs to the TSs: 33.0 kcal/mol from RC4 to TS4, 14.0 kcal/mol from RC5 to TS5, 8.3 kcal/mol for RC6 to TS6, 4.0 kcal/mol for RC7 to TS7, and 3.4 kcal/mol for RC8 to TS8. This indicates that additional H$_2$O molecules substantially catalyze this reaction. As the RCs proceed to the TSs, the O–C–I angle, the C–O bond length, and the C–I bond length display smaller changes as the number of H$_2$O molecules increases. For example, the O–C–I angle undergoes a change of $-9.5^\circ$ from RC5 to TS5, $-6.6^\circ$ from RC6 to TS6, $-3.8^\circ$ from RC7 to TS7, and only $2^\circ$ from RC8 to TS8. Similarly, the C–O bond length displays a change of $-0.016$ Å from RC5 to TS5, $-0.103$ Å from RC6 to TS6, $-0.082$ Å from RC7 to TS7, and $-0.062$ Å from RC8 to TS8.
FIG. 7. Schematic diagrams are shown for the reactants, reactant complexes, transition states, product complexes, and products for the reactions of CH$_2$I(OH)$_n$H$_2$O (where $n=0,1,2,3,4$). The optimized geometry for these species was obtained from MP2 calculations (using the 6-31G* basis set for all C, H, and O atoms and the 6-311G** basis set for iodide atoms). Selected bond length (in Å) and bond angle (in degrees) parameters are shown.
from RC7 to TS7, and $-0.076 \text{ Å}$ from RC8 to TS8. The C–I bond show changes in the bond lengths of $0.715 \text{ Å}$ from RC5 to TS5, $0.560 \text{ Å}$ from RC6 to TS6, $0.355 \text{ Å}$ from RC7 to TS7, and $0.342 \text{ Å}$ from RC8 to TS8. These changes suggest less energy is needed to go from the RCs to their TSs as more H$_2$O molecules are added, consistent with the lower reaction barriers observed as more H$_2$O molecules are involved in the CH$_2$I(OH)$_n$H$_2$O($n=1,2,3,4$) reaction.

3. Water catalysis of the reactions of CH$_2$I–I+nH$_2$O (where $n=1,2,3$) and CH$_2$I(OH)$_n$H$_2$O (where $n=0,1,2,3,4$) and solvation of the HI leaving group

It is interesting to compare our results to those previously found for neutral I(H$_2$O)$_n$ and I$^{-}$(H$_2$O)$_n$ complexes$^{123-125}$ as well as for the dissolution of strong acids (HX) by H$_2$O molecules.$^{126-131}$ For example, the stabilization energy of the I atom with H$_2$O is very weak and was computed$^{125}$ to be about 0.5 kcal/mol for I·HOH and 1.65 kcal/mol for I·OH$^2$ compared to the I$^{-}$ anion with H$_2$O that was computed to be about $-10.38 \text{ kcal/mol}$ (Ref. 125) or $-9.43 \text{ kcal/mol}$ (Ref. 124). The stabilization energy of the (CH$_2$I–I)$H_2$O and [CH$_2$I(OH)]$H_2$O RCs were found to be 4.2 kcal/mol for RC1 and 8.4 kcal/mol for RC5, respectively. These values are between those found for the neutral I(H$_2$O)$_n$ and I$^{-}$(H$_2$O)$_n$ complexes$^{124,125}$ and suggest that solvation of the I$^{-}$-like moiety occurs in the (CH$_2$I–I)$H_2$O and [CH$_2$I(OH)]$H_2$O RCs. Figure 8 shows a comparison of the stabilization energies of the RCs and the reaction enthalpies for the CH$_2$I(OH)$_n$H$_2$O($n=1,2,3,4$) reactions plotted along with the relative energy for the barrier to reaction from the RCs to their respective TS as a function of the number of H$_2$O molecules. The lines give linear best fits to the stabilization energies of the reactant and product complexes and a best-fit exponential function to the barrier heights to the reactions as a function of the number of H$_2$O molecules.

![Figure 8](image-url)

**FIG. 8.** (a) Schematic diagrams of the relative energy profiles (in kcal/mol) obtained from MP2 calculations (sing the 6-31G* basis set for all C, H, and O atoms and the 6-311G** basis set for iodide atoms) for the reactions of CH$_2$I–I+nH$_2$O (where $n=1,2,3$). (b) Schematic diagrams of the relative energy profiles (in kcal/mol) obtained from MP2 calculations (using the 6-31G* basis set for all C, H, and O atoms and the 6-311G** basis set for iodide atoms) for the reactions of CH$_2$I(OH)$_n$H$_2$O (where $n=0,1,2,3,4$). (c) Plot of the stabilization energies (in kcal/mol) of both the reactant (open circles) and product (solid triangles) complexes and the barrier to reaction (solid squares) for the CH$_2$I(OH)$_n$H$_2$O (where $n=1,2,3,4$) reactions as a function of the number of H$_2$O molecules. The lines give linear best fits to the stabilization energies of the reactant and product complexes and a best-fit exponential function to the barrier heights to the reactions as a function of the number of H$_2$O molecules.
rrier to reaction exhibits an almost exponential decay due to
greater stabilization of the TSs relative to the RCs as the
H₂O molecules increase in number. The trends in the stabi-
лизation energies of the RCs for the CH₂I–I+nH₂O (where
n = 1,2,3) and CH₂I(OH)+nH₂O (where n = 1,2,3,4) re-
actions are similar to previous results for solvation of an I−
ion by H₂O molecules 124,125 and consistent with solvation of an I− like moiety in these reactions.

It is useful to compare our present results to those re-
cently found for the dissociation of HI in H₂O complexes. 129
This study found that the stabilization energies of the
HI(H₂O)ₙ clusters varied from 4.02 kcal/mol for n = 1 to
56.97 kcal/mol for n = 5 similar to the trend found for the
(CH₂I−I)(H₂O)ₙ [and [CH₂I(OH)](H₂O)ₙ] RCs and TSs in
Figs. 7 and 8. The average H−I distances were found to be
~1.6 Å for HI(H₂O)ₙ where n = 0,1,2, ~2.1 Å for
HI(H₂O)₃, and ~2.5 Å for HI(H₂O)₅ where n = 4,5. 129
These results suggested that HI remains nondissociated with
addition of one or two H₂O molecules, but becomes partially
dissociated into a H₂O +, I− “ion-pair”-like species for the
HI(H₂O)₅ complex and then is completely dissociated in the
HI(H₂O)₉ where n = 4,5, complexes. 129 The HI-elimination
reactions of the [CH₂I(OH)](H₂O)ₙ species are very similar
to the dissociation of HI in the HI(H₂O)ₙ species. Examina-
tion of the structures for the (CH₂O)₂(HI)(H₂O)ₙ product
complexes in Fig. 7 shows that PC4 with no H₂O molecule and
PC5 with one H₂O molecule have H−I bond distances of
1.648 Å and 1.686 Å, respectively, which are close to the
~1.6 Å value for a nondissociated HI molecule. For the
(CH₂O)₂(HI)(H₂O)ₙ PCs with n = 2 and 3, the H−I dis-
tances become intermediate in range with values of 2.294 Å
for PC6 and 2.374 Å for PC7, consistent with partial disso-
ciation into a H₂O +, I− “ion-pair”-like species similar to
that found for the HI(H₂O)₃ complex. 129 For the (CH₂O)₂
×(HI)(H₂O)ₙ product complex, the H−I distances become
longer with values in the 2.5–2.7 Å range for PC8, consis-
tent with complete dissociation into H₂O + and I− species
similar to that found for the HI(H₂O)₅ complexes where n
= 4 and 5.

An NBO analysis was done for the RCs, TSs, and PCs in
Figs. 5–8. The terminal (or leaving) I atom has a NBO
charge of −0.567 for RC1, −0.601 for RC2, and −0.655 for
RC3 for the CH₂I–I+nH₂O (where n = 1,2,3) water-
catalyzed O−H-insertion and HI-elimination reactions. The
charges on the terminal I atom increases significantly as the
RCs proceed to their respective TSs and have values of
−0.829 for TS1, −0.844 for TS2, and −0.801 for TS3. The
negative charges initially on the I atom of the CH₂I(OH)
molecule for the CH₂I(OH)+nH₂O (where n = 0,1,2,3,4)
HI-elimination reactions are fairly small for their RCs with
values of −0.045 for RC4, −0.145 for RC5, −0.124 for
RC6, −0.130 for RC7, and −0.161 for RC8, but increase
substantially in their respective TSs to −0.784 for TS4,
−0.728 for TS5, −0.739 for TS6, −0.608 for TS7, and
−0.600 for TS8. For both the CH₂I−I+nH₂O (where n
= 1,2,3) and CH₂I(OH)+nH₂O (where n = 0,1,2,3,4) re-
actions the negative charge increases significantly from the
RCs to their respective TSs with changes of charge of
−0.262 from RC1 to TS1, −0.243 from RC2 to TS2, and
−0.146 from RC3 to TS3 for the O−H-insertion/HI elimina-
tion reactions and −0.739 from RC4 to TS4, −0.583 from
RC5 to TS5, −0.615 from RC6 to TS6, −0.478 from RC7 to
TS7, and −0.439 from RC8 to TS8 for the HI-elimination
reactions. As the number of H₂O molecules increases, there
tends to be less change in the negative charge on the I atom
as these reactions go from their RCs to their respective TS.
This suggests that less energy is needed for redistribution
of the charge to the I atom leaving group as the reaction goes
from the RCs to their corresponding TSs. This behavior cor-
relates with generally smaller structural changes and lower
reaction barrier heights as the RCs go to their respective TSs
as the number of H₂O molecules involved in these HI elimi-
nation reactions increases.

There are some interesting differences between the dis-
sociation of HI in the HI(H₂O)ₙ complexes and the water-
catalyzed HI elimination reactions investigated here. For ex-
ample, the proton is transferred from the HI molecule to the
O atom of a water molecule in the dissociation of HI in the
HI(H₂O)ₙ complexes, while the proton is transferred from
the OH group of the CH₂I(OH) molecule in the
(CH₂I(OH))(H₂O)ₙ water-catalyzed HI-elimination reac-
tions. This leads to the proton on the O−H group being
shared with a H₂O molecule in the transition states (TS5–
TS8) of the [CH₂I(OH)](H₂O)ₙ water-catalyzed HI-
elimination reactions. The HI-elimination and-dissociation
processes in the CH₂I–I(H₂O)ₙ reactions are coupled to the
O−H insertion reaction with water and this results in the
C−O bond formation of the H₂O molecule being coupled to
a proton transfer to another H₂O molecule and the solva-
tion of the terminal I atom (and cleavage of the I−I bond) of
the CH₂I–I species (see Fig. 6). This suggests that the water-
catalyzed solvation and dissociation of a HI or similar leav-
ing groups may be coupled to help drive other reactions for
other potential synthetic applications. The ability of using
water to catalyze other reactions by employing an appropri-
ate leaving group(s) would probably be of general interest
for synthetic chemists.

D. Proposed reaction mechanism for the CH₂I₂+hν
+n(H₂O)→CH₂I(OH)₂+2HI+(n−2)H₂O
overall reaction

Based on our present experimental and theoretical re-
sults as well as other work already available in the literature,
we propose the following reaction mechanism for the
CH₂I₂+hν+n(H₂O)→CH₂I(OH)₂+2HI+(n−2)H₂O
overall reaction that we observe for photolysis of low con-
centrations of CH₂I₂ in aqueous solutions:

\[ \text{Photolysis of CH}_2\text{I}_2 \rightarrow \text{CH}_2\text{I}_2+\text{I}^{\cdot} \]

\[ \text{Solvation-induced geminate recombination of the CH}_2\text{I}_2 \text{ and I fragments} \]

\[ \text{Step 1 CH}_2\text{I}_2+h\nu\rightarrow\text{CH}_2\text{I}+\text{I}^{\cdot} \]

\[ \text{Solvent-induced geminate recombination of the CH}_2\text{I}_2 \text{ and I fragments to form the CH}_2\text{I}_2 \text{-I isomer} \]

\[ \text{Step 2 CH}_2\text{I}_2+\text{I}^{\cdot}\rightarrow\text{CH}_2\text{I}_2\text{-I} \]

\[ \text{Water-catalyzed O−H-insertion and HI-elimination reaction of CH}_2\text{I}_2 \text{-I with H}_2\text{O solvent} \]

\[ \text{Step 3 CH}_2\text{I}_2+\text{I}^{\cdot}+n(\text{H}_2\text{O})\rightarrow\text{CH}_2\text{I}(\text{OH})+\text{HI}+(n−1)\text{H}_2\text{O} \]

\[ \text{Water-catalyzed HI-elimination reaction of CH}_2\text{I}(\text{OH}) \text{ with H}_2\text{O solvent} \]
Step 4: \( \text{CH}_2\text{I(OH)} + n\text{(H}_2\text{O)} \rightarrow \text{H}_2\text{CO} + \text{HI} + n\text{(H}_2\text{O)} \).

Water (and/or acid) catalyzed addition of \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) to \( \text{H}_2\text{CO} \) in \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) solvent:

Step 5: \( \text{H}_2\text{CO} + n\text{(H}_2\text{O)} \rightarrow \text{CH}_2\text{(OH)}_2 + (n - 1)\text{H}_2\text{O} \).

Add steps 1 to 5 to obtain this overall reaction:

\[
\text{CH}_2\text{I}_2 + h\nu + n\text{(H}_2\text{O)} \rightarrow \text{CH}_2\text{(OH)}_2 + 2\text{HI} + (n - 2)\text{H}_2\text{O}.
\]

It has been well established that ultraviolet excitation of \( \text{CH}_2\text{I}_2 \) in both gas and solution phases results in direct cleavage of the C–I bond to produce \( \text{CH}_2\text{I} \) radical and I atom fragments, and this indicates that step 1 in the above reaction mechanism is the primary photochemical start of the reaction. It has been clearly experimentally demonstrated that some of the initially produced \( \text{CH}_2\text{I} \) radical and I atom fragments can undergo solvent-induced geminate recombination to form a \( \text{CH}_2\text{I} \)–I isomer species within a few picoseconds, and this establishes that step 2 of the proposed reaction mechanism occurs to an appreciable extent in room-temperature solutions. Our ps-TR \(^3\) experiments show that \( \text{CH}_2\text{I} \)–I is produced to an appreciable extent in largely aqueous solutions and has a substantially shorter lifetime with increasing water concentrations. This suggests that \( \text{CH}_2\text{I} \)–I is reacting with \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) molecules and is consistent with the proposed step 3 of the reaction mechanism. Previous experimental and theoretical studies indicated that \( \text{CH}_2\text{I} \)–I species is an effective carbenoid species mostly responsible for the cyclopropanation of olefins when the ultraviolet photolysis of \( \text{CH}_2\text{I} \) method is used. Other isopolymethanoles were also found to act as carbenoids with varying degrees of reactivity to olefins. The chemical reactivity of \( \text{CH}_2\text{I} \)–I was found to be similar to that of singlet methylene towards C–C bonds in producing cyclopropanated products with high stereospecificity and little C–H-insertion products. It is well known that carbenes and carbendins such as singlet methylene and dichlorocarbene (:\( \text{CCl}_2\)\(^\text{\text{2}}\)) undergo \( \text{O–H} \) insertion reactions with water to produce \( \text{CH}_3\text{OH} \) and \( \text{CHCl}_2\text{OH} \) products, respectively. Thus one may reasonably expect that the \( \text{CH}_2\text{I} \)–I carbenoid species probably can undergo similar reactions with \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \). Our present \( \text{ab initio} \) study shows that this is indeed the case and \( \text{CH}_2\text{I} \)–I reacts with \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) via a water-catalyzed \( \text{CH}_2\text{I} \)–I \( \text{O–H} \)-insertion and \( \text{HI} \)-elimination reaction with three \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) molecules involved.

The ultraviolet photolysis of \( \text{CH}_2\text{I}_2 \) in the gas phase leads predominantly to a direct C–I bond cleavage and for-
formation of CH$_2$I radical and I fragments with a near-unity photon quantum yield. However, we found that ultraviolet photolysis of CH$_2$I at low concentrations in aqueous solution leads to conversion of the parent molecule into 2HI and CH$_2$(OH)$_2$ stable products with about a 0.35 photon quantum yield. These results indicate that the photochemistry of CH$_2$I$_2$ exhibits significant phase dependence with very different reactions taking place in aqueous solution compared to the gas phase. The reaction mechanism proposed in Sec. III C that involves the O–H-insertion and HI-elimination reactions of CH$_2$I–I with water and the HI-elimination reaction of CH$_2$I(OH) with water combined with the known chemistry of formaldehyde in water can account for how ultraviolet photolysis of CH$_2$I$_2$ in aqueous solution can undergo dehalogenation to make 2HI and CH$_2$(OH)$_2$ products. These water-catalyzed reactions of CH$_2$I–I with water and the subsequent HI-elimination reaction of CH$_2$I(OH) with water may be noticeable sources of halogens and/or acid formation in the atmosphere. The water-catalyzed reactions of isopolyhalomethanes like CH$_2$I–I have not been considered to our knowledge for the water solvated photochemistry of polyhalomethanes that have been observed in the natural environment from natural and/or man-made sources.

We have recently used ps-TR$_3$ experiments to observe appreciable formation of isopolyhalomethanes (like CH$_2$I–I and BrCHBr–Br) in mixed aqueous solutions. In the case of isobromoform (BrCHBr–Br), we were able to directly observe its O–H-insertion reaction with water to form a CHBr$_2$(OH) product. We note that photolysis of a number of polyhalomethanes in condensed-phase media has been found to produce noticeable amounts of isopolyhalomethanes and it is likely that a range of isopolyhalomethanes can be formed in noticeable quantities in aqueous solvents as observed for other solvent systems. Insofar as other isopolyhalomethanes exhibit similar chemical reactivity with water as the CH$_2$I–I species, we expect that photolysis of polyhalomethanes in solvated water environments would release significant amounts of HX strong acid leaving groups. This suggests that the pH in the solvated aqueous environment around the parent polyhalomethane becomes more acidic and may significantly influence reactions associated with the activation of halogens in aqueous sea-salt particles since many reaction schemes presented depend on pH. For halogen activation on aqueous sea-salt particles, key reactions have been proposed where H$^+$ and X$^-$ help activate the halogen atom (these studies typically focused on release of bromine and/or chlorine). Reaction schemes have proposed HOX$^+$ + H$^+$ + X$^-$ → X$_2$ + H$_2$O (where X = Cl and/or Br) and/or HOX$^+$ + H$^+$ + X$^-$ → X + H$_2$O as a key step(s) in the halogen activation process.

Our present work indicates that photolysis of CH$_2$I$_2$ in aqueous solution releases two HI groups. We speculate that if this happens in aqueous sea-salt particles, the HI released may cause analogous reactions to activate halogens such as by the HOX$^+$ + H$^+$ + I$^-$ → XI + H$_2$O reaction. If X is Cl or Br, then the activation of I would be accompanied by Cl or Br and likely cause additional ozone destruction via their known synergistic pathways. Photolysis of CH$_2$BrI in aqueous solution produces both HBr and HI similar to producing 2HI groups from ultraviolet photolysis of CH$_2$I$_2$ studied here.

We also found that ultraviolet photolysis of CH$_2$I in aqueous solution does not release noticeable acid groups and this is probably due to its inability to make an isopolyhalomethane from its two initially produced photofragments in the condensed phase. We note that the photochemistry of CH$_2$I$_2$ and CH$_2$BrI was found to be responsible for most of the IO observed in the marine boundary layer of the troposphere. However, CH$_3$I made very little contribution even though it is present in greater amounts (mean concentration of 0.43 pptv compared to 0.08 and 0.05 pptv for CH$_2$I$_2$ and CH$_2$BrI, respectively). We speculate that the aqueous-phase photochemistry of CH$_2$I$_2$ and CH$_2$BrI that releases strong acids with the potential for halogen activation in sea-salt particles may possibly account for why the photochemistry of CH$_2$I$_2$ and CH$_2$BrI are mainly responsible for the formation of IO in the marine boundary layer, while the CH$_2$I molecule (which does not have the isopolyhalomethane chemistry and its strong acid release) does not have much of a contribution to IO production. We have observed that ultraviolet photolysis of several polyhalomethanes in aqueous solutions releases strong acids with reasonable quantum yields via their isopolyhalomethane chemistry. Thus we feel it would be worthwhile to pursue additional studies to better understand how this water-solvated chemistry may actually influence or affect the chemistry of the atmosphere, particularly for reactions that are acid catalyzed or affected by pH such as halogen activation in heterogeneous environments.

Halomethanols like bromomethanol and chloromethanol can be formed in the atmosphere by reaction of hydroxymethyl radicals (CH$_2$OH) with atomic or molecular halogens in the gas phase and may possibly act as a halogen reservoir in the atmosphere. Chloromethanol was found to decompose into HCl and H$_2$CO products and have a lifetime of at least a 100 s (and probably much longer) due to homogeneous decomposition in the gas phase. Chloromethanol was also found to decay much faster on surfaces. Our present ab initio results for the reaction of iodomethanol [CH$_2$I(OH)] indicate that the decomposition of halomethanols can be greatly accelerated by even a reaction with one water molecule and further accelerated by additional H$_2$O molecules. This suggests that decomposition of halomethanols will be very sensitive to the humidity of the atmosphere and rapidly decomposes in solvated water environments (such as the interfacial and/or bulk regions of water and ice particles). It would appear to be prudent to investigate the reaction rates for halomethanols with H$_2$O in the gas phase, on surfaces, and in bulk aqueous solutions to better understand their decomposition in the atmosphere. Our present ab initio work for the CH$_2$I–I reactions with water and our recent direct observation of the O–H insertion reaction of isobromoform to produce the CHBr$_2$(OH) molecule indicate that halomethanols can be produced in appreciable amounts due to the photochemistry of polyhalomethanes in solvated aqueous environments. This new photochemical route to produce halomethanols could be exploited to explore the relatively unknown chemistry of halomethanols in condensed-phase environments.

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IV. CONCLUSION

Photochemistry experiments were shown that observe ultraviolet photolysis of low concentrations of CH₂I₂ in water leads to almost complete conversion into CH₂O(OH)₂ and 2HI products. *Ab initio* calculations showed the CH₂I⁻⁻I species can react readily with water via a water-catalyzed O–H-insertion and HI-elimination reaction to produce CH₂I(OH) + HI. This CH₂I(OH) product then undergoes a further water-catalyzed HI elimination reaction to form H₂O + HI. These HI-elimination reactions make the two HI leaving groups seen in the photochemistry experiments. The H₂C══O product further reacts with water to form the other final CH₂(OH)₂ product seen in the photochemistry experiments. These results combined with the experimental observation of CH₂I⁻⁻I in largely aqueous solutions indicate CH₂I⁻⁻I reacts with water to produce the CH₂(OH)₂ and 2HI products observed in the low-concentration-CH₂I₂ photochemistry experiments. A reaction mechanism was proposed that is consistent with our present experimental and theoretical results as well as with other experimental results.

Our *ab initio* calculations showed systematic changes in the natural environment. This may prove to be an active and interesting area of research.

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