

# Secondary organic aerosol from biomass burning phenolic compounds and nitrate radicals can be highly viscous over a wide relative humidity range

Sepehr Nikkho<sup>1</sup>, Bin Bai<sup>2</sup>, Fabian Mahrt<sup>1, 3, †</sup>, Julia Zaks<sup>1</sup>, Long Peng<sup>1, ‡</sup>, Kristian J. Kiland<sup>1, §</sup>, Pengfei Liu<sup>2</sup>, and Allan K. Bertram<sup>1, \*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Chemistry, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, V6T 1Z1, Canada

<sup>2</sup> School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA, 30332, USA

<sup>3</sup> Laboratory of Atmospheric Chemistry, Paul Scherrer Institute, Forschungsstrasse 111, 5232 Villigen, Switzerland

<sup>†</sup> Now at: Department of Chemistry, Aarhus University, 8000 Aarhus, Denmark

<sup>‡</sup> Now at: College of Ecology and Environment, Xinjiang University, Urumqi 830017, China

<sup>§</sup> Now at: Department of Integrative Oncology, British Columbia Cancer Research Institute, Vancouver British Columbia, V5Z 1L3, Canada

\* Corresponding author

## Abstract

Biomass burning events, including wildfires, can emit large amounts of phenolic compounds such as guaiacol. These phenolic compounds can undergo oxidation by nitrate radicals ( $\text{NO}_3$ ) to form secondary organic aerosol (SOA). Viscosity and hygroscopicity are key properties that affect SOA's role in atmospheric chemistry, air quality, and climate. However, these properties have not been quantified for SOA formed from the reaction of phenolic compounds with  $\text{NO}_3$ . We used the poke-flow technique and a quartz crystal microbalance (QCM) to measure the viscosity and hygroscopicity of SOA particles generated from the reaction of  $\text{NO}_3$  with guaiacol, termed guaiacol- $\text{NO}_3$  SOA. The viscosity of this SOA is extremely high ( $\approx 5 \times 10^7$  Pa s) at  $\text{RH} \lesssim 70\%$  and drastically higher than previously reported for other SOA types investigated with the poke-flow technique at  $\text{RH} \gtrsim 40\%$ . The high viscosity for guaiacol- $\text{NO}_3$  SOA can be attributed, at least in part, to the low hygroscopicity measured by the QCM. From the viscosity results, we calculated the mixing times of organic molecules within guaiacol- $\text{NO}_3$  SOA. The results suggest that mixing times within guaiacol- $\text{NO}_3$  SOA particles with atmospherically relevant sizes exceed 1 hour for most tropospheric conditions, with possible implications for predicting the size, mass, and long-range transport of pollutants in phenolic SOA.

## 1. Introduction

Biomass burning events, including wildfires, can emit large amounts of phenolic compounds, such as guaiacol, catechol, and syringol into the atmosphere.<sup>1-5</sup> Once in the atmosphere, phenolic compounds can be oxidized by hydroxyl radicals (OH), ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), and nitrate radicals (NO<sub>3</sub>) to form lower volatility products, which can partition to the particle phase, forming secondary organic aerosol (SOA).<sup>2,6-17</sup> OH and O<sub>3</sub> are the main oxidants during the day, while NO<sub>3</sub> and O<sub>3</sub> are the main oxidants during the night or during the day in light-limited environments, such as within dense biomass burning plumes.<sup>16,18</sup> A recent study suggests that oxidation of biomass burning plumes by NO<sub>3</sub> during the night can lead to rapid production of SOA in the atmosphere.<sup>19</sup>

SOA, including phenolic SOA can impact climate indirectly by acting as cloud condensation nuclei and possibly ice nucleating particles, thereby changing the reflectivity and lifetime of clouds.<sup>20-23</sup> In addition, SOA can contribute to poor air quality and negatively impact human health.<sup>24-26</sup>

Viscosity is a physiochemical property of SOA that is important for predicting its impact on climate and air quality.<sup>27</sup> Viscosity is inversely related to molecular diffusion rates within SOA particles, based on the Stokes-Einstein equation.<sup>28</sup> As a result, viscosity can impact gas-particle partitioning and the mass and size distributions of SOA in the atmosphere.<sup>29-40</sup> In addition, viscosity can affect the rates and mechanisms of multiphase reactions within SOA particles<sup>36,41-53</sup> and the long-range transport of particle-borne pollutants like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.<sup>41,54-57</sup> Some studies have also suggested that highly viscous SOA can act as heterogeneous nuclei for ice formation in the atmosphere,<sup>23,58-63</sup> although the importance of the glassy phase state for ice nucleation is still a matter of debate.<sup>64</sup>

Many studies have quantified the viscosity of SOA generated with OH or O<sub>3</sub>. In addition, two studies investigated the viscosity of phenolic SOA generated using OH or O<sub>3</sub> as the oxidants.<sup>65,66</sup> In contrast, much less is known on the viscosity of SOA, either phenolic or other types, formed with NO<sub>3</sub>.

Kasparoglu et al. suggested that SOA generated from the oxidation of  $\alpha$ -pinene by NO<sub>3</sub> was viscous or hydrophobic or both, based on ice nucleation measurements.<sup>64</sup> In addition, experiments

by Perraud et al. suggested that SOA generated from the oxidation of  $\alpha$ -pinene by a combination of  $O_3$  and  $NO_3$  is highly viscous, based on the non-equilibrium partitioning of organic nitrates.<sup>67</sup>

Field measurements have also suggested that atmospheric aerosol particles can be more viscous at night compared to the day.<sup>68,69</sup> Slade et al. found this to be true for aerosol particles in a forest environment.<sup>68</sup> Differences were attributed to terpene-derived, higher molecular weight SOA at night and isoprene-derived, lower molecular weight SOA during the day. Bateman et al. studied anthropogenic emissions in the Amazon and observed an increase in particle rebound fraction in an impactor at night, which is associated with more viscous particles.<sup>69</sup>

Hygroscopicity is another key physiochemical property of SOA that is important for predicting its climate impact.<sup>70,71</sup> Hygroscopicity determines the water content of the particles, and hence their light scattering properties and ability to act as nuclei for cloud droplets.<sup>70–72</sup> Hygroscopicity also impacts the viscosity of SOA.<sup>73–78</sup> Consider for example an SOA type that has a high hygroscopicity and a high viscosity under dry conditions, such as SOA generated by OH oxidation of toluene.<sup>52,79,80</sup> For this system, as the relative humidity (RH) increases, the SOA particles will take up water and the overall viscosity will decrease<sup>52,79,80</sup> since water has a lower viscosity than dry SOA.<sup>78</sup>

The hygroscopicity of SOA generated from  $O_3$  or OH has been extensively studied.<sup>81–84</sup> In addition, there have been some studies on the hygroscopicity of phenolic SOA and proxies for phenolic SOA.<sup>85–88</sup> In comparison, there have been fewer studies on the hygroscopicity of SOA generated by  $NO_3$ ,<sup>89–91</sup> and we are not aware of any research that has quantified the hygroscopicity of phenolic SOA generated with  $NO_3$  as the oxidant.

Here, we measured the RH-dependent viscosity of SOA particles at 294 K generated by reacting  $NO_3$  with guaiacol (2-methoxyphenol), referred to as guaiacol- $NO_3$  SOA. Guaiacol, a phenolic compound, is emitted from biomass burning events and can contribute significantly to SOA formation in the atmosphere.<sup>2,11,14,16,17,92–95</sup> We use guaiacol as a model system for phenolic compounds from biomass burning events. We found that the viscosity of this SOA is extremely high ( $\approx 5 \times 10^7$  Pa s) at  $RH \lesssim 70\%$ . In addition to measuring the RH-dependent viscosity of guaiacol- $NO_3$  SOA, we also developed a parameterization for predicting the viscosity of this SOA

as a function of RH and temperature, and used this parameterization to predict the viscosity and mixing times within phenolic SOA in the atmosphere.

We also measured the hygroscopicity of the guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA to better understand the high viscosities of this SOA type. For comparison purposes, we also measured the hygroscopicity of guaiacol-OH SOA. The results suggest that phenolic SOA generated by NO<sub>3</sub> during the night can have a much higher viscosity than phenolic SOA generated by OH during the day, and the differences can be explained, at least partially, by the low hygroscopicity of the guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Production of Guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA

Guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA was generated in an environmental chamber (Fig. 1) consisting of a 1.8 m<sup>3</sup> Teflon bag (Ingeniven) suspended within an aluminum enclosure and surrounded by 24 UV lights (Sylvania Black lights, 40 W  $\lambda$  ~360 nm).<sup>96</sup> The chamber was cleaned with deionized water and then flushed with zero-air (Aadco 737) for 48 h while the UV lights were on. SOA generation was carried out in the continuous flow mode at 294 K, in the dark, and under dry conditions ( $\leq$  1% RH). The total flow rate through the environmental chamber was  $\sim$ 16 L min<sup>-1</sup>, corresponding to an average residence time of  $\sim$ 112 min, calculated assuming plug flow. SOA was produced without seed particles to prevent their influence on the viscosity and hygroscopicity measurements.

Organic vapors were added to the environmental chamber by continuously injecting a solution of 2 wt. % guaiacol (Sigma Aldrich, purity  $\geq$  99.9%) in ultrapure water (Merck Millipore, Milli-Q.) into a round bottom glass flask. The flask was heated to  $\sim$ 323 K to enhance vaporization. The resulting vapors were carried into the environmental chamber by continuously flushing the flask with zero-air. Prior to reaction, the concentration of guaiacol in the environmental chamber was  $\sim$ 50 ppb.

NO<sub>3</sub> was generated within the environmental chamber by the thermal decomposition of dinitrogen pentoxide (N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>). N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> was generated upstream of the environmental chamber by reacting O<sub>3</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub> in a flow reactor (Fig. 1), following established methods.<sup>97,98</sup> The flow reactor consisted

of four large glass vessels coupled in series with an overall volume of 60 L. The average residence time within the flow reactor was ~39 minutes, assuming plug flow. The following reactions occurred within the flow reactor:



The  $\text{O}_3$  for reaction  $\text{R}_1$  was generated upstream of the flow reactor by continuously passing zero-air through an ozone generator (Jelight, model: 600).  $\text{NO}_2$  was continuously added to the flow reactor from a cylinder (806 ppm  $\text{NO}_2$  in nitrogen gas). The concentration of  $\text{NO}_2$  and  $\text{O}_3$  in the flow reactor were measured with a  $\text{NO}_x$  analyzer (Thermo Scientific, 42i  $\text{NO}_x$ ) and an  $\text{O}_3$  analyzer (Thermo Scientific, 49i), respectively. The ratio of  $\text{NO}_2$ :  $\text{O}_3$  before reaction in the flow reactor was ~2:1. The gas-phase rate constants for these reactions are shown in Table S1.

We employed a MATLAB-based kinetic model (Supporting Information, Section S1) to assess  $\text{NO}_3$  and  $\text{N}_2\text{O}_5$  concentrations in the flow reactor and the environmental chamber (Figs. S1 and S2). Based on these simulations, prior to reaction with guaiacol,  $\text{NO}_3$  and  $\text{N}_2\text{O}_5$  levels in the chamber were around 460 ppt and 220 ppb, respectively. Additionally, the thermal decomposition of  $\text{N}_2\text{O}_5$  continuously supplied  $\text{NO}_3$  within the environmental chamber as guaiacol reacted with  $\text{NO}_3$ . Based on the kinetic model, greater than 99.9% of guaiacol reacted with  $\text{NO}_3$ , while the rest reacted with  $\text{O}_3$ .

The generated SOA mass concentration at the chamber exit was measured using an optical particle counter (GRIMM, 11-S OPC), averaging 40-100  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$  for the experiments discussed herein. For viscosity measurements, SOA was collected onto glass slides with hydrophobic and oleophobic coatings (CYTONIX, FluoroPel 800). SOA collection was carried out using a multi-orifice single-stage impactor (Moudi, Model 100-180nm-10LPM). Since long collection times were used, SOA that impacted on the hydrophobic and oleophobic slides coagulated to form super-micrometer particles (50-100  $\mu\text{m}$  diameter). For hygroscopicity measurements, SOA was collected on Teflon filters (Sartorius PTFE Membrane Filters, pore size of 5  $\mu\text{m}$ ) at a flow rate of ~12  $\text{L min}^{-1}$  for 3-6 h each. Filters were stored at -18 °C in air-tight containers prior to analysis.

We used a high-resolution time-of-flight aerosol mass spectrometer (HR-ToF-AMS) from Aerodyne Research<sup>99</sup> to probe the composition of the guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA. The amount of nitrogen-containing compounds in the mass spectrum was 15% (Section S2 and Fig. S3), consistent with expectations based on previous HR-AMS measurements of SOA generated by reactions of NO<sub>3</sub> with volatile organic compounds.<sup>66,100</sup> As expected for this reaction, all of the nitrogen-containing compounds identified in the mass spectrometer originated from organic nitrogen compounds. For details, see Section S2.

## 2.2. Production of Guaiacol-OH SOA

Guaiacol-OH SOA was generated using the same environmental chamber described above and similar experimental conditions described in Kiland et al.<sup>65</sup> Briefly, the chamber was operated in continuous flow mode, with a total flow rate of ~19.2 L min<sup>-1</sup>. A solution of guaiacol (2 wt. %) in MilliQ water was injected into a heated round bottom glass flask, and the vaporized solution was flushed into the environmental chamber. OH was generated by the photolysis of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> using 24 UV lights (Sylvania Black lights, 40 W λ ~360 nm). H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> was added to the environmental chamber by continuously injecting a solution of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (Sigma-Aldrich, 30 wt. % in water) into a heated round bottom glass flask, and the resulting vapors were flushed into the chamber with zero air. The mass concentration of SOA at the exit of the chamber was 50-70 μg m<sup>-3</sup>. The SOA was collected in a similar fashion as described in Sect. 2.1.

## 2.3. Hygroscopicity Measurements

Hygroscopicity of the SOA particles collected on the Teflon filter was measured using a Quartz Crystal Microbalance (QCM). After collection, a piece of SOA-laden filter was pressed on the surface of a clean QCM sensor (Novaetech, AT5-14-12-AU). The filter was then peeled off, leaving a thin film of SOA remaining on the sensor surface. After preparation, the QCM crystals were mounted in a temperature-controlled flow module (Q-sense, QFM401) and purged with zero air at a total flow rate of 30 cm<sup>3</sup> min<sup>-1</sup>. The RH in the flow cell was switched between dry (< 1% RH) and humidified (10–95% RH) conditions by changing the mixing ratio of dry and humidified pure air flows using two mass flow controllers. An RH sensor (Rotronic, HC2A-S) continuously monitored the RH in the cell. The QCM (Q-sense Explorer) continuously monitored the mass of SOA film, as described elsewhere.<sup>80</sup>

The SOA mass at the dry condition (< 1% RH) was measured before and after the measurement at an elevated RH, and possible evaporation of dry organic material was accounted for (e.g. SI, Fig. S4). The mass sensitivity of the QCM was < 1 ng cm<sup>-2</sup>, corresponding to one-tenth of a single molecule-layer of water. This sensitivity was sufficient for accurately detecting water uptake at RH values > 10%. The adsorption of water vapor on a blank sensor surface was determined and subtracted from the hygroscopic growth calculation (SI, Fig. S5). From the QCM measurements, we determined the mass-based hygroscopic growth factor, which is the ratio of the particle mass at a specific RH to the particle mass under dry condition. In addition, we determined the mass-based hygroscopicity parameter ( $\kappa_m$ ) using the following equation:<sup>72</sup>

$$\kappa_m = \left( \frac{100}{RH} - 1 \right) \frac{m_w}{m_d} \quad \text{Eq. 1}$$

where  $m_w$  and  $m_d$  is the mass of water and dry SOA, respectively, and RH is the relative humidity.

The QCM method for hygroscopicity measurements was validated by experiments using amorphous sucrose thin films in our previous study, which shows good agreement with results derived from other methods.<sup>101</sup>

## 2.4. Viscosity Measurement

The viscosity of the super-micrometer SOA particles was determined using the poke-flow technique described in detail previously.<sup>102–104</sup> A hydrophobic slide containing SOA particles was placed inside a RH-controlled flow cell that was coupled to an inverted optical microscope (AmScope, ME1400TC-INF, Fig. S6a). To control the RH within the flow cell, dry and/or humidified zero-air was continuously flowed through the cell. The dew point of the air was measured by a chilled mirror hygrometer (General Eastern, 1311DR-SR-115V) mounted downstream of the flow cell. The temperature of the cell was monitored by a thermocouple (OMEGA, HH-200a) probe connected to the flow cell, and was approximately 294 K for all measurements reported here. The RH within the cell was calculated from the dew point of the air and temperature of the cell.

Prior to poking the particles, the particles were conditioned to the RH within the flow cell. After conditioning, the particles were poked with an ultra-fine tungsten needle (Roboz Surgical Instruments Co., Fig. S6). The needle was coated with an oleophobic solution (CYTONIX, OilSlip



110) and was mounted on a micromanipulator (Narishige; model MO-202), which enables high-precision three-dimensional movement of the needle. Upon poking the particle, a non-equilibrium geometry was generated (Fig. S6b). After retrieving the needle from the particle, the SOA material flowed (unless the viscosity was very high) and returned to initial equilibrium geometry, i.e. spherical cap geometry, to minimize the surface energy of the system.<sup>103</sup> At high RH values ( $\geq 70\%$ ), the particle formed a roughly half-torus geometry after poking (e.g. Fig. 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> row). From the images recorded when the SOA material flowed, we determined the time required for the inner diameter of the half-torus shape to reduce by  $\sim 50\%$  of its initial value, which we term the experimental flow time  $\tau_{\text{exp,flow}}$ . For RH values  $\lesssim 60\%$ , the particles cracked and did not flow during the observation time (e.g. Fig. 2, 1<sup>st</sup> row). In these cases the observation time was used as a lower limit to  $\tau_{\text{exp,flow}}$ .

To convert  $\tau_{\text{exp,flow}}$  to viscosity we used fluid dynamics simulations of the poked particles, carried out using a microfluidics module within COMSOL Multiphysics (COMOSL Inc., v5.4). The simulations took into account the Navier–Stokes momentum equation and the continuity equation. For particles that formed an approximately half-torus geometry after poking, a half-torus geometry was used in the simulations. Upper and lower limits for the particle’s surface tension, contact angle, and Navier slip length (Table S2) were used as input to the simulation along with the particle’s size, density, the hole’s inner diameter, and experimental flow time  $\tau_{\text{exp,flow}}$ . Simulations were run with a range of viscosities. The viscosities that gave the best fit to the experimental data were determined by comparing the simulated final inner diameter to the experimental final inner diameter of the half-torus geometry. The upper bound and lower bound viscosities were calculated using conservative upper and lower limits to the surface tension, contact angle, and Navier slip length in the simulations (Table S2).

In the experiments where particle cracked after poking, a quarter sphere model with a sharp edge was used as the initial geometry.<sup>103</sup> The viscosity in the simulations was adjusted until the sharp edge moved by  $0.5 \mu\text{m}$  for the observation time of the experiment. A distance of  $0.5 \mu\text{m}$  corresponded to the resolution of the microscope. Since  $0.5 \mu\text{m}$  is an upper limit to the movement in our experiments, the corresponding viscosity extracted from these simulations is considered a lower limit to the true SOA viscosity.

In the poke-flow experiments, we used conditioning times of 20-22 h, 3-19 h, and 1-2 h, for RH values of 47-67%, 70-89%, and 90-97%, respectively. For RH values of 70-97%, the mixing time of water in the particles was shorter than the conditioning times, indicating the particles reached near-equilibrium conditions with the surrounding RH prior to poking (Section S4 and Table S3). For RH values of 47-60% the mixing times of water within the particles was longer than the conditioning times (Section S3 and Table S3). Under these conditions, however, poking the particles caused them to crack. Continuing the conditioning process will most likely result in the same type of cracking, and we can expect the same viscosity outcome because additional conditioning, which involves further drying, tends to increase viscosity.

When conditioning the SOA particles, the particles were exposed to a flow of  $\sim 1 \text{ L min}^{-1}$ . A set of separate experiments show that evaporation of semi-volatile organic compounds was small, if any during conditioning (Section S4 and Figs. S4 and S7).

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Hygroscopicity of Guaiacol SOA

Mass-based hygroscopic growth factors (mass growth factors), the ratio of the particle mass at a certain RH to the particle mass under dry conditions ( $\text{RH} < 1\%$ ), were determined with a quartz crystal microbalance for both guaiacol- $\text{NO}_3$  and guaiacol-OH SOA (Fig. 3a). The mass-based hygroscopic growth factor for guaiacol- $\text{NO}_3$  SOA particles was 1.01-1.05 at  $\text{RH} \leq 80\%$ . The guaiacol-OH SOA hygroscopic growth factor was 1.03-1.25, significantly higher over the same RH range. Above 95% RH, the hygroscopic growth factor for guaiacol- $\text{NO}_3$  SOA drastically increased. This drastic increase may have been due to liquid-liquid phase separation occurring within the SOA at RH values above 95%. Previous thermodynamic calculations have shown that a low-polarity SOA can exist as an organic-rich phase below approximately 95% and undergo liquid-liquid phase separation at high RH values to form an organic-rich and water-rich phase, concurrent with a drastic increase in the SOA hygroscopic growth factor.<sup>101,105,106</sup>

Mass-based hygroscopicity parameters ( $k_m$ , Eq. 1) were also determined with QCM measurements (Fig. 3b). Guaiacol-OH SOA has  $k_m$  values of 0.085 to 0.136 at  $\leq 80\%$  RH. Guaiacol- $\text{NO}_3$  SOA has  $k_m$  values of 0.006 to 0.024, significantly lower under the same RH range. The significantly

lower  $k_m$  values for guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA is consistent with previous studies. For example, Suda et al. showed that the hygroscopicity parameter is lower for organic molecules with NO<sub>3</sub>-functional groups compared to carboxylic acid, peroxide, and alcohol functional groups.<sup>107</sup> In addition, Zhang et al. showed that the hygroscopicity parameter for SOA generated by NO<sub>3</sub> oxidation of monoterpenes was much reduced compared to SOA generated by OH and O<sub>3</sub> oxidation of monoterpenes.<sup>89</sup>

### 3.2. Room Temperature Viscosity as a Function of RH

The poke-flow technique was used to determine the viscosity of the guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA at 294 K as a function of RH. At  $\lesssim 60\%$  RH, the particles cracked and did not flow for up to 21 h (e.g. Fig. 2, 1<sup>st</sup> row), indicating high viscosity and likely glassy phase state. At  $\gtrsim 70\%$  RH, the particles flowed when poked (e.g. Fig 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> row). Cracking of SOA particles have been observed previously at room temperature, but only at  $\lesssim 25\%$  RH.<sup>65,108–112</sup>

A summary of the experimental flow times determined with the poke-flow technique for guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA are shown in Fig. S8. The corresponding viscosities are shown in Fig. 4, with viscosity measurements at similar RH values combined to determine overall upper and lower limits. The viscosity of guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA is high ( $\gtrsim 5 \times 10^7$  Pa s) at RH values  $\lesssim 70\%$ . For reference, the viscosity of tar pitch is  $\sim 10^8$  Pa s. Even at 80% RH, the viscosity of guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> is still  $\sim 6 \times 10^5$  Pa s. Our results are consistent with previous studies that suggested SOA generated with NO<sub>3</sub> may be highly viscous.<sup>64,67</sup>

For comparison purposes, in Fig. 4a we have included the viscosities of guaiacol-OH SOA reported by Kiland et al.<sup>65</sup> The viscosity of guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA is significantly higher than guaiacol-OH SOA at  $\gtrsim 20\%$  RH (Fig. 4a). For instance, at 40-50% RH, the viscosity of guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA particles is  $> 5$  orders of magnitude higher than that of guaiacol-OH SOA particles. These results emphasize that phenolic SOA produced at night could be much more viscous than phenolic SOA produced during the day.

The difference between the viscosities of guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA and guaiacol-OH SOA at  $\gtrsim 20\%$  RH can be explained, at least in part, by a lower hygroscopicity parameter for guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA

compared to guaiacol-OH SOA. Water has a very low viscosity ( $10^{-3}$  Pa s) and lowers the overall viscosity when added to a high viscosity material, by acting as a plasticizer. A lower hygroscopicity means less water uptake, and hence less reduction in viscosity as relative humidity increases.<sup>78</sup>

Recently, Gregson et al. showed that primary biomass burning organic aerosols generated by smoldering of pine wood contain two phases, a hydrophobic phase and a hydrophilic phase.<sup>113</sup> The viscosity of the hydrophobic phase was largely independent of the RH up to  $\sim 95\%$ . The trend we observed for guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA is similar to the trend Gregson et al. observed for their hydrophobic phase and can be attributed to the relatively hydrophobic nature of the material.

In Fig. 4b, we have also included the viscosity of other SOA types determined with the poke-flow technique and reported previously.<sup>65,109,112,114,115</sup> All of the other SOA types were generated using OH or O<sub>3</sub> as the oxidant, i.e. major daytime oxidants. The viscosity of guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA is drastically higher than the other types of SOA at  $\geq 40\%$  RH. For example, at 50% RH, the viscosity of guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA is 2-6 orders of magnitude higher than that of other SOAs investigated. These results highlight that SOA generated by NO<sub>3</sub> reactions with phenols could be drastically more viscous than other types of SOA. The difference between the viscosities of guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA and the other types of SOA can be explained, at least in part, by the low hygroscopicity parameter for guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub>, as discussed above. The differences may also be related to difference in molecular weights of the SOA components. Viscosity is known to correlate with molecular weight,<sup>73,116</sup> and guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA contains large molecular weight dimers, based on previous mass spectrometry studies.<sup>7,117</sup>

### 3.3. Viscosity as a Function of RH and Temperature

To extrapolate the viscosity results for guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> shown in Fig. 4a to other RH values and temperatures, we developed parameterizations that can describe the viscosities as a function of both RH and temperature, as done previously (see Section S5).<sup>109,114</sup> For comparison, we have also extrapolated the guaiacol-OH SOA results from Kiland et al.<sup>65</sup> to other RH values and temperatures. First, we fit a mole fraction-based Arrhenius mixing rule to the viscosity data in Fig. 4a, resulting in a parameterization of viscosity as a function of RH at 294 K (dashed lines in Fig. 4a). Second, we extended the 294 K parameterization to higher and lower temperatures using the

Vogel-Fulcher-Tammann equation.<sup>118</sup> Shown in Fig. 5 is the resulting parameterization as a function of both RH and temperature determined using this method. A liquid, semisolid, and amorphous solid phase state (i.e. glassy phase state) have a viscosity of  $< 10^2$  Pa s,  $10^2$ - $10^{12}$  Pa s, and  $> 10^{12}$  Pa s, respectively.<sup>78</sup> The viscosity of guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA (Fig. 5a) is largely independent of the RH between 0 to 80% at all temperatures. For temperatures less than 270 K and RH lower than 80%, the guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA is in a glassy phase state (viscosity  $> 10^{12}$  Pa s). In contrast, the guaiacol-OH SOA (Fig. 5b) is strongly dependent on both RH and temperature and only forms a glassy phase state when both the temperature and RH are low.

### 3.4. Atmospheric Implications

To extrapolate the viscosity results from our study to the atmosphere we combined annual average RH and temperature values in the troposphere with the parameterizations for viscosity as a function of RH and temperature (Fig. 5) following the approach used previously.<sup>109,119</sup> Annual average tropospheric RH and temperature values were extracted from the European Center Hamburg Model/Modular Earth Submodel System Atmospheric Chemistry Model.<sup>120</sup> The results of this extrapolation are presented in Fig. 6 for guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA and guaiacol-OH SOA.

Based on our extrapolations (Fig. 6a), guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA is most often in a semi-solid state in the planetary boundary layer ( $\lesssim 1$  km in altitude) and a glassy phase state in the free troposphere ( $1\text{ km} \lesssim \text{altitude} \lesssim 18$  km). The liquid state is only predicted for a limited region of the planetary boundary layer ( $\gtrsim 80^\circ$  latitude). In constant, a liquid state is predicted for almost all conditions in the planetary boundary layer for guaiacol-OH SOA (Fig. 6b). A glassy phase state can limit heterogeneous reactions.<sup>36,41-53</sup> In addition, a glassy phase state can potentially act as a heterogeneous nucleus for ice formation in the atmosphere,<sup>23,58-62</sup> although the importance of the glassy phase state for ice nucleation is still a matter of debate.<sup>64</sup>

Mixing time is defined as the time it takes for the concentration of the diffusing species at the particle's center to deviate by less than  $1/e$  from the equilibrium concentration. Knowledge of the mixing time of organic molecules within SOA particles is important for forecasting both the size distribution and mass of SOA particles.<sup>29-40,69,121,122</sup> Additionally, mixing time plays a key role in

anticipating the long-range transport of pollutants trapped in SOA particles.<sup>54–57,123</sup> Most chemical transport models assume the mixing times of organic molecules is < 1 h.

We calculated the mixing times of organic molecules within guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> and guaiacol-OH SOA particles from the viscosity results. The mixing time of organic molecules within the SOA particles ( $\tau_{\text{mix,org}}$ ) was calculated based on the following equation:

$$\tau_{\text{mix,org}}(\text{RH}, T) = \frac{d_p^2}{4\pi^2 D_{\text{org}}(\text{RH}, T)} \quad \text{Eq. 2}$$

where  $d_p$  is the diameter of the SOA particle, assumed to be 200 nm for the troposphere and,  $D_{\text{org}}(\text{RH}, T)$  is the diffusion coefficient of organic molecules within the SOA particle as a function of RH and temperature. The diffusion coefficient of organic molecules within SOA particle was estimated using the Stokes-Einstein equation:

$$D_{\text{org}}(\text{RH}, T) = \frac{kT}{6\pi\eta(\text{RH}, T)R_{\text{diff}}} \quad \text{Eq. 3}$$

where  $D_{\text{Org}}(\text{RH}, T)$  is the RH- and temperature-dependent diffusion coefficient of the organic molecules within SOA,  $k$  is the Boltzmann constant,  $\eta(\text{RH}, T)$  is the RH- and temperature-dependent viscosity of the SOA, and  $R_{\text{diff}}$  is the radius of the diffusing molecule. For  $R_{\text{diff}}$ , we assumed a value of 0.4 nm, as done previously, which is generally consistent with the expected sizes of SOA molecules. The Stokes-Einstein equation gives values consistent with experimentally measured diffusion coefficients of organic molecules when the radius of the diffusing molecules is equal to or larger than the radius of the molecules composing the organic matrix.<sup>28,124</sup>

The calculated annual average mixing time of organics within guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> and guaiacol-OH SOA particles are shown as a function of latitude and altitude in Fig. 7. For guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA (Fig. 7a), mixing times are > 1 h for the vast majority of the troposphere. Mixing times are only < 1 h for some regions of the planetary boundary layer (-70° to -50°, -20° to 20°, and 60° to 90°). In contrast, the mixing times within guaiacol-OH SOA (Fig. 7b) in the planetary boundary layer are always < 1 h. The short mixing times for guaiacol-OH SOA within the planetary boundary layer

are due to the relatively warm temperatures and high RH values in this region of the atmosphere and because the viscosity of guaiacol-OH SOA decreases significantly as RH increases.

Our results suggest that mixing times in phenolic SOA generated from  $\text{NO}_3$  may often be  $> 1$  h in the planetary boundary layer and free troposphere. These results have possible implications for predicting the size and mass of biomass burning phenolic SOA and the long-range transport of pollutants within biomass burning phenolic SOA. Additional research is needed to determine if other types of phenolic SOA formed by  $\text{NO}_3$  reactions have viscosities and mixing times similar to guaiacol- $\text{NO}_3$  SOA.

The above analysis did not take into account the difference in RH and temperature between day and night. Furthermore, the seasonal differences in RH and temperature in the atmosphere were not considered. Additional studies exploring these aspects would be informative. The lifetime of SOA in the atmosphere is on the order of a few weeks.<sup>22</sup> Hence, SOA generated during the night can affect atmospheric chemistry and air quality during the following day.

The above analysis also did not consider the internal mixing of phenolic- $\text{NO}_3$  SOA with other types of aerosol. Mixing of phenolic- $\text{NO}_3$  SOA with other types of aerosol may lead to lower viscosities than illustrated here if they form a single phase.<sup>125</sup> On the other hand, phenolic- $\text{NO}_3$  SOA may form a separate phase when mixed with other types of aerosols due to differences in polarity and hygroscopicity.<sup>126–129</sup> Studies are needed to determine if phenolic SOA generated by  $\text{NO}_3$  reactions will mix with other types of organic aerosol. The particles employed in our study ranged from 50 to 100  $\mu\text{m}$  in diameter. Finite size effects can significantly reduce the viscosities of SOA when the diameter is less than or equal to approximately 100 nm.<sup>130</sup> Consequently, we expect our findings to be relevant to particles larger than approximately 100 nm, but experiments are needed to confirm this hypothesis.

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## Figures

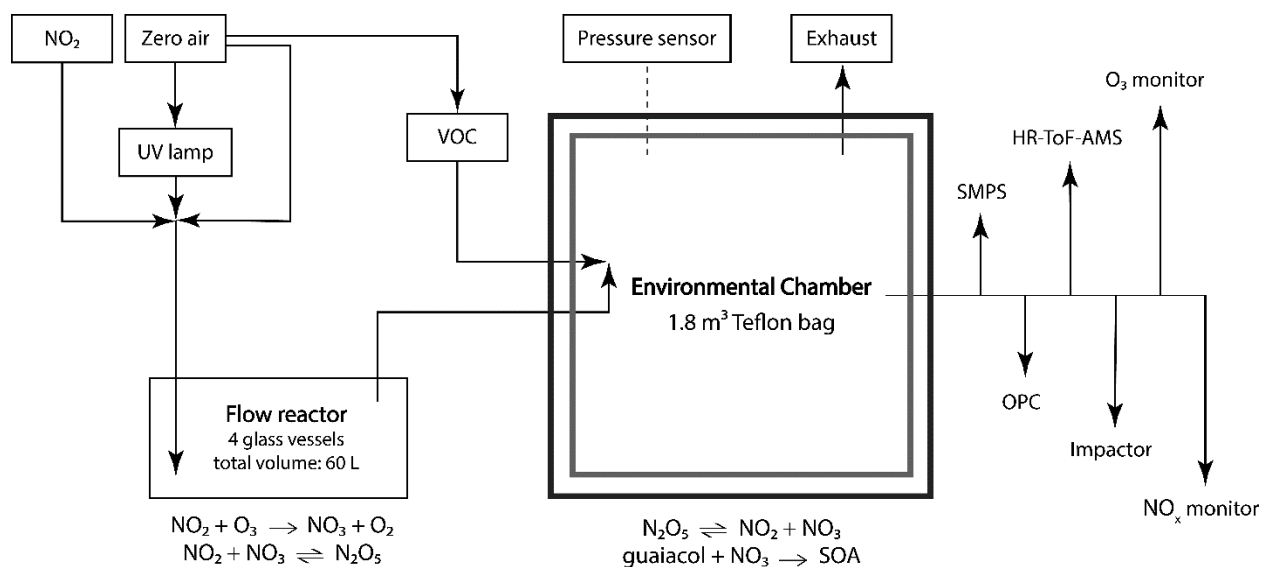


Figure 1. Schematic of the flow reactor and environmental chamber used to generate guaiacol- $\text{NO}_3$  SOA. The high-resolution time-of-flight aerosol mass spectrometer (HR-ToF-AMS), scanning mobility particle sizer (SMPS), and optical particle counter (OPC) were used to monitor the concentration and composition of SOA in the environmental chamber. The  $\text{O}_3$  monitor and  $\text{NO}_x$  monitor were used to monitor the concentration of precursors.

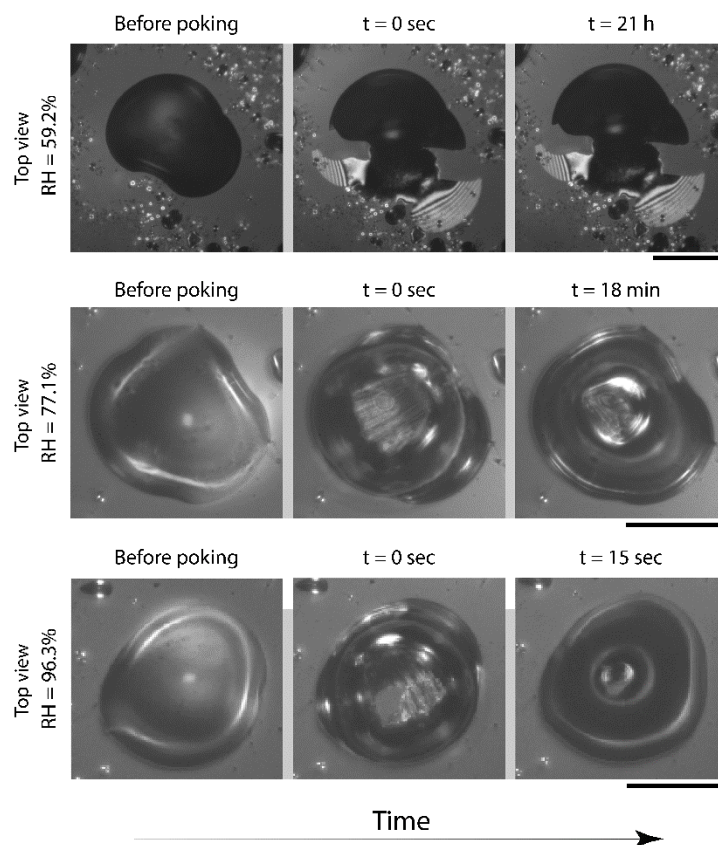


Figure 2. Optical microscope images of SOA particles from guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> poked at 59.2%, 77.1%, and 96.3 % RH, captured with the poke-flow setup. The scale bars represent 50 μm.

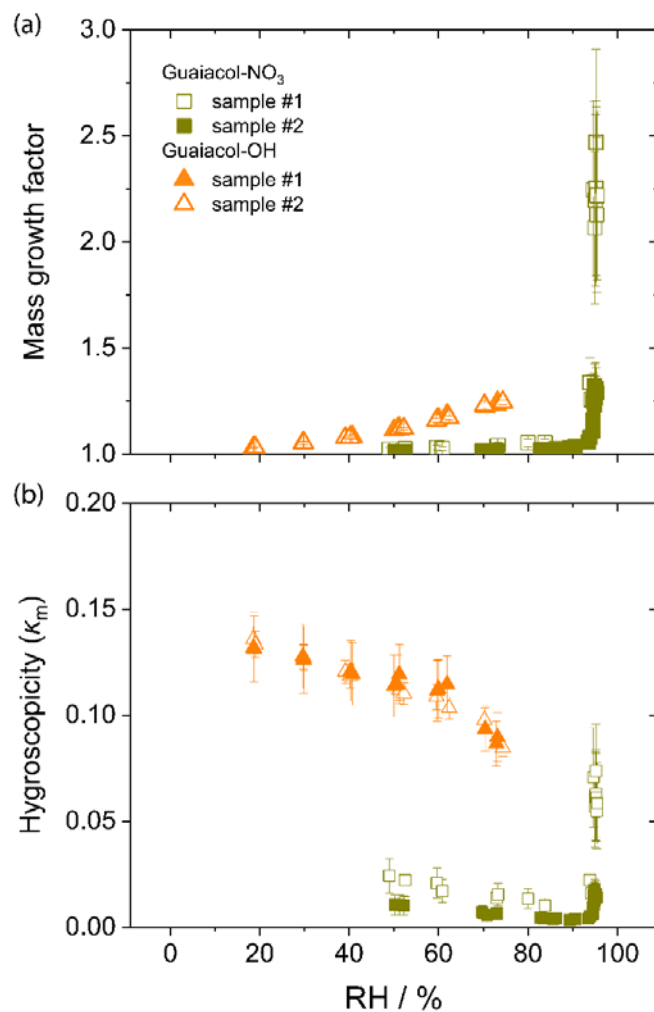


Figure 3. (a) Mass hygroscopic growth factor results from QCM measurements for guaiacol-OH and guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA particles as a function of RH. (b) Mass-based hygroscopicity parameter ( $\kappa_m$ ) for guaiacol-OH and guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA particles under different RH values.

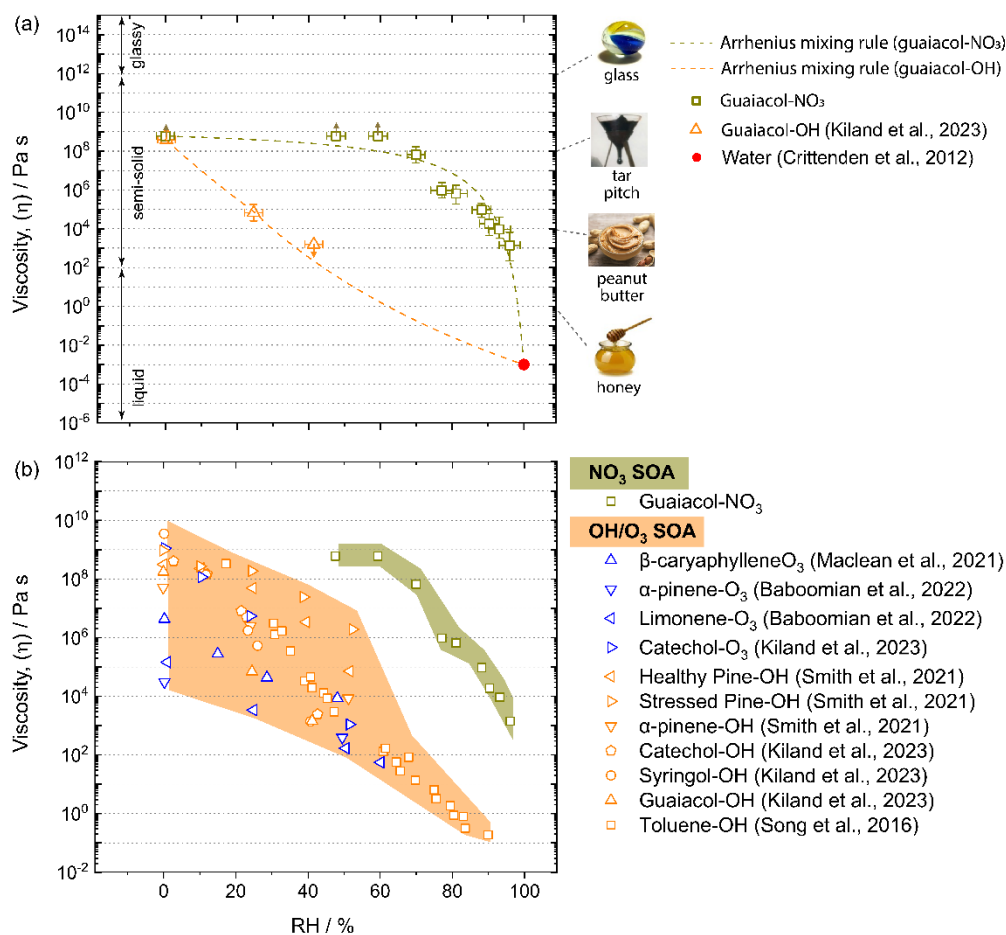


Figure 4. Results from the poke-flow experiments. (a) The viscosity for guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA (green squares) and guaiacol-OH SOA (orange triangles). The higher and lower limits of viscosities measured from the poke-flow experiments for repeat runs of the same SOA and RH conditions are shown as y-error bars and the symbols represent the midpoint on a log scale. The x-error bars represent the uncertainty in RH. The red filled circle represents the viscosity of pure water at 294 K<sup>131</sup>. The dashed lines show the equation of Arrhenius mixing rule fitted to the viscosity data (see Section S5 for details). The viscosity of guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA particle at 0% RH is a lower limit and is based on an extrapolation from the measurements at higher RH values, assuming viscosity does not increase with a decrease in RH. Viscosity data for guaiacol-OH SOA was taken from literature.<sup>65</sup> (b) The viscosity of guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA compared to other SOAs oxidized with OH/O<sub>3</sub> and measured with the poke-flow technique. Each data point represents the average value and error bars have been omitted for clarity. The green and orange bands are added to aid in distinguishing the viscosity difference between NO<sub>3</sub> and OH/O<sub>3</sub> SOAs, respectively.

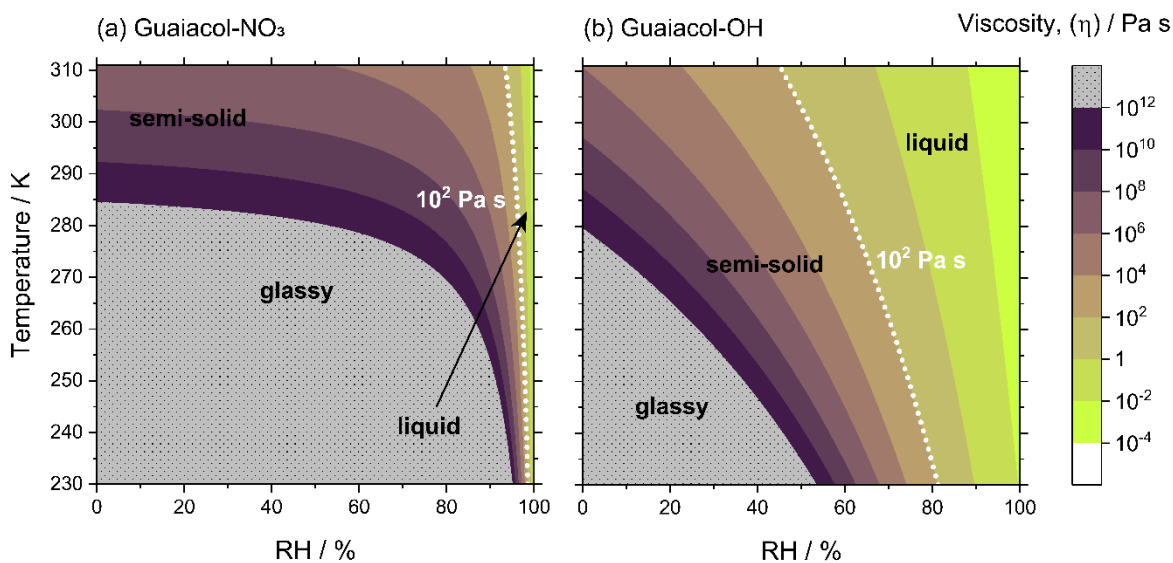


Figure 5. The viscosity of (a) guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA and (b) guaiacol-OH SOA as a function of RH and temperature. The white dotted line represents the transition from liquid to semi-solid, which occurs at a viscosity of  $10^2$  Pa s. The glassy phase state is shown with grey color where viscosity is  $10^{12}$  Pa s or higher.

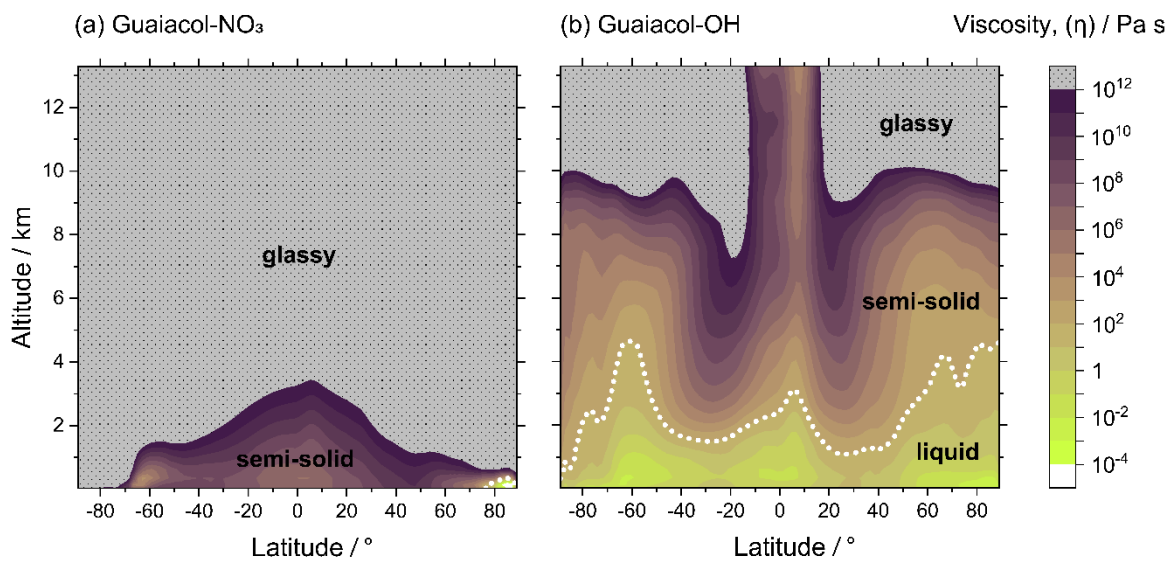


Figure 6. The zonally averaged viscosity of (a) guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> SOA and (b) guaiacol-OH SOA particles as a function of latitude and altitude in the troposphere. The white dotted line represents the transition from liquid to semi-solid phase.

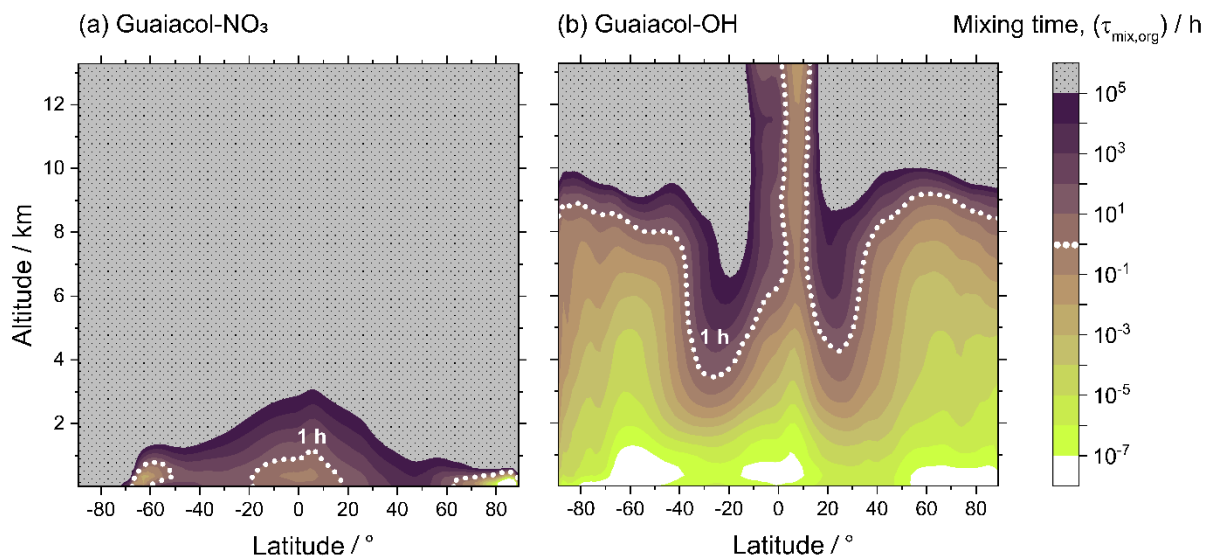


Figure 7. Annually averaged mixing times of organic molecules within 200 nm SOA particles: (a) guaiacol-NO<sub>3</sub> and (b) guaiacol-OH SOA particles. The white dotted line highlights the mixing times of 1 h. Chemical transport models often use the assumption of fast mixing i.e. a mixing time of  $\approx 1$  h. Mixing times for the glassy phase state is not shown in this figure.

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