Computational studies of Lignocellulose deconstruction

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- I. Thermal decomposition of biomass
- **II.** Cellulose Properties responsible for recalcitrance to digestion
- **III.** Alter cellulose substrate for efficient digestion
- **IV. Mechanistic kinetic model for Cellulases**



National Energy Security





U.S. economy is heavily dependent on oil imports.

U.S. has 4% of the world's population but consumes 25% world's oil production.

Domestic production of crude oil has declined but the dependence on imported oil has increased and accounts for 65% of crude oil supplies.

Biofuels are an alternative to conventional energy sources that increase our Nation's energy security by dramatically reducing our dependence on imported oil.



Currently, our Nation's growing bioethanol industry is largely based on the use of starch in grains such as corn, that are also needed for food.



National Corn Growers Association, The World of Corn, 2009 and previous annual editions,

Corn for ethanol production has increased by nearly 5- fold from 2000 to 2008

Corn based Ethanol



Process is similar to making "moonshine" which initially became popular during prohibition





Where will the food come from?





Source: National Corn Growers Association, The World of Corn, 2009

Energy Independence & Security Act of 2007

36 billion gallons of annual renewable fuel use by 2022 and required that 60 % to be met by advanced biofuels, including cellulosic ethanol

Lignocellulosic biomass, the inedible fibrous material from wood and plant stems, is an abundant alternative source.



corn stalks are more challenging!



Biofuels need to be made from a wide range of hardy and fast-growing plants, such as switchgrass--which is a perennial native to American prairies. It requires about a quarter of the irrigation and fertilization of row crops.

Cellulosic-ethanol Refineries

Completion

date

2009

2009

2010

2011

2010

2011

Feedstock

Corn stover

(cobs and stalks)

Waste wood

Wood, aq waste

Corn stover,

wheat straw, etc.

Ag waste

Waste wood,

energy crops

Ethanol Production Facilities Current and Under Construction, January 24, 2008



Source: Renewable Fuels Association, http://www.ethanolrfa.org/.

Industry has been slow to explore the potential of lignocellulosic biomass because so far it is more difficult and costly than starch to convert to ethanol.



Biomass Conversion

Main problem: complex structure of plant Cell wall, impedes efficient Conversion into sugars that can be fermented to ethanol



Source: DOE EERE Office of the Biomass Program, Multi-year Program Plan, Appendix C.

Biomass recalcitrance



Plant cell walls contain cellulose

Biomass

microfibrils, hemicelluloses & lignins



38%-50% Cellulose

Alternating glucose residues are in an inverted orientation so the cellobiose (a disaccharide) is the repeating structural unit.

15%-25%

Lignin

23%-32% Hemicellulose

Crystalline cellulose

The glucan chains contain thousands of glucose residues.







Layered mesh of microfibrils in plant cell wall





Lignin

- Complex aromatic structure
- High Energy Content
- Resists biochemical conversion

Hemicellulose

- Xylose

- Polymer of 5- and 6- carbon sugars

The quantitative glycosyl residue composition (Ara:Fuc:Gal:GalA:Glc:Xyl = 2:1:2:1:2:1)

The sequence of glycosyl residues



The absolute configuration (D or L)

Pretreatment



- Hemicellulose

LIGNIN DEGRADATION

Microorganisms :

Wood rotting fungi – depolymerization of lignins by C-C bond cleavage



Slide from M. Gold

QM Studies on Lignin Models

MeO

OMe

OMe



D. W. Cho, R. Parthasarathi, A. S. Pimentel, G. D. Maestas, H. J. Park, U. C. Yoon, D. Dunaway-Mariano, S. Gnanakaran, P. Langan, P. S. Mariano, The Nature and Kinetic Analysis of Carbon-Carbon Bond Fragmentation Reactions of Cation Radicals Derived from SET-Oxidation of Lignin Model Compounds, J. Org. Chem 75 (2010) 6549–6562.

- Radical cationic state playing a essential part in Lignin fragmentation
- Evaluate relative chemical reactivity trends from **Ionization potentials**
- Identify weak C—C bond fragmentation in lignin compounds
- Recognize the potential reactive sites

Study of Diverse Linkages in Lignin

Monomeric precursors of lignin

Common linkages in lignin



R. Parthasarathi, R. A. Romero, A. Redondo, S. Gnanakaran, *Theoretical Study of the Remarkably Diverse Linkages in Lignin*, *J. Phys. Chem. Letters.* 2011. 2, 2660–2666.





Density Functional Calculations of bond fragmentation in 65 distinct Lignin Model Compounds

Bond dissociation energies (kcal/mol)



Ether bond linkages

C-C bond linkages

Weakest lignin linkage

Ether linkage - α-O-4

BDE= 48.31 kcal/mol





Strongest lignin linkage



Influence of ortho methoxy group substitutions



Metal oxides as catalysts for fast pyrolysis



Collaboration with Tom Elder (USDA)

Catalytic Pyrolysis of Bibenzyl





Exploiting quantum and classical computational methods to study the atomistic details of the interactions of NaCl with βglucose, oligomeric and crystalline fibrillar cellulose

Simulation Details

- System
 - Aqueous α-glucose (α-D-Glc)
 - Aqueous β-glucose (β-D-Glc)

- Replica exchange molecular dynamics (REMD) simulations
 - Control (H2O, 0% NaCl, Sol)
 - 5.0% wt. NaCl (0.9 M)
 - 10.5% wt. NaCl (2 M)
- NVT REMD simulations
 - Temperature range 275 ~ 505 K
 - Used Glycam06 for glucose
 - Ion force field from Joung & Cheatham, JPCB 2008, 112, 9020



α-glucose



β-glucose

Radial distribution function –Solvation by Water



No Significance difference between α -glucose and β -glucose

Influence of Alkali Metal on stereoisomers of glucose

Alkali metal effects that depend on stereochemistry

- Coordination with Alkali Metals

Alkali metal effects that didn't depend on stereochemistry

- Conformations of Glucose

Single Coordination to Alkali Metal



- Affinity of Na to hydroxyl or hydroxymethyl oxygen: O2>O6>O3
- Affinity for β-glucose is lower, and the order is slightly different: O2≈O6>O3

Bridged Coordination to Alkali Metal



- Several bridging coordination positions with Na+ possible
- However, probabilities are lower for β-glucose

Summary – Part I

Reactivity trends of diverse linkages and substitutions of lignin model compounds

Ongoing Work

- Interactions of bi-benzyl with (CaO)₂ metal oxide have been studied using DFT approach to understand mechanistic insights involved in the catalytic pyrolysis reactions
- Acid Catalyzed reactions of beta5 model compounds
- Effect of Na+ on cellulose pyrolysis

Enzymatic Degradation

endoglucanases randomly attack the cellulose chain, creating free ends for exoglucanses to process along the chain and create dimers of glucose (cellobiose). β -glucosidases, then, hydrolyze these cellobiose units

Carbohydrate Binding Domain

Linker



PART II.

Cellulose Properties responsible for Recalcitrance to digestion

Native plant-derived cellulose I microfibrils



Cellulose – A Dynamical System



Movie: Al French (USDA)

Giovanni Bellesia, Andrea Asztalos, Tongye Shen, Paul Langan, Antonio Redondo and S. Gnanakaran. Computational studies of crystalline cellulose and its degradation by enzymes. Acta Crystal. D. (2010).

Multiscale modeling of cellulose assembly/disassembly



Initial Studies



Coarse-grained Hydrogen Bond Network Model for Crystalline Cellulose

The multiplicity in H-bond network and switching between different Hbond networks with increasing temperature make the cellulose assembly very stable

"The stability of cellulose: a statistical perspective from a coarse grain model of hydrogen bonding" Shen, T., Gnanakaran, S<u>.</u> Biophysical Journal 96, 3032-3040 (2009).

All-atom molecular dynamics of Cellulose Oligomers and their assembly

• Effective sampling of structural properties cellulose including ring flips

 Mechanical properties- chains are getting less flexible with increasing # o monomers

Conformational flexibility of soluble cellulose oligomers: Chain Length & Tdependence. Tongye Shen, Paul Langan, Alfred D. French, Glenn P. Johnson and S. Gnanakaran. J. Am. Chem. Soc., 131: 14786 (2009).








Why is cellulose so stable?

Stability of cellulose fibers is due to

- Intra-molecular hydrogen bonding



Cross-strand H-bonding elements





Single chains (2mer, 4mer, 6mer):



Torsions Flexibility Ring flips

Chains (2mer, 4mer, 6mer): End-to-end distances and Flexibilities



Ring Flipping Tendencies in Cellulose Oligomers



Rings at the non-reducing end is more stable





"Fiber Formation"





• At high T (>460K), the system is in a random configuration with little order; while at lower T, the system is in a much more ordered state.

• At low T (<310K), all factors indicate the system is going to a different state.



PART III.

Alter cellulose substrate for efficient digestion

Cellulose can exist in various crystalline forms



Perez & Samain, 2010



Rearrangement of H-bonding during treatment of cellulose with NH₃



Masahisa Wada, Yoshiharu Nishiyama, Giovanni Bellesia, Trevor Forsyth, S. Gnanakaran and Paul Langan. Neutron crystallographic and molecular dynamics studies of the structure of ammonia-cellulose I: rearrangement of hydrogen bonding during the treatment of cellulose with ammonia. Cellulose. 18, **2011**, 191-206, 9488-5



Liquid Ammonia Pretreatment





Nishiyama et al., Biomacromolecules 9(11), 3133-3140 (2008)



DOE Great Lakes Bioenergy Center

Why is it easier to digest cellulose III?



RESTRUCTURING CELLULOSE HYDROGEN BOND NETWORK

Chemical Properties: Quantum Mechanical Calculations (JPC A , **2011**, 115 pp. 14191-14202)

Dynamical Properties: All-atom Molecular Dynamics (JACS, **2011**, 133 pp. 11163-11174) (JPC B , **2011**, 115 pp. 9782-9788)

Bulk Properties:

Coarse-grained Description (JPC B , **2012**, PMID: 22712833)

Initial Molecular Events Associated with Liquid NH₃ Treatment







(J. Phys. Chem. B, 2011, 115 pp. 9782-9788)

Hydrogen Bonding .vs. Stacking Interactions

Cellulose I_β and Cellulose III, Model conformations



Interplay between H-bonding and Stacking

Cellulose I_β

- Strong Hydrogen bonding interactions within a sheet
- Highly cooperative stacking between sheets

Cellulose III₁

- Slightly weaker hydrogen bonding but cooperative
- Non-cooperative stacking interactions



R. Parthasarathi, G. Bellesia, S.P.S. Chundawat, B. E. Dale, P. Langan, and S Gnanakaran. *The Journal of Physical Chemistry A*, 115:14191-202 (2011) – Highlighted in Cover.



DYNAMICS, KINETICS, ENVIRONMENTAL CHEMISTRY, SPECTROSCOPY, STRUCTURE, THEOR

Molecular Electrostatic Potential Map



Improved exposure of the hydroxyl groups and glycosidic oxygens in cellulose III,

The color scale indicates the charges on the atoms: red = most negative, green = neutral, blue = most positive charge: ± 0.04 au isosurface.

O6 side chain based Conformational Variability



FIBRIL SURFACE BEHAVES DIFFERENTLY FROM THE CRYSTALLINE CORE



(J. Am. Chem. Soc., 2011, 133 pp. 11163-11174)

COARSE-GRAINED MODEL (II)



Summary II. Differences between cellulose I and III Cellulose I_B Cellulose III₁

- Strong Hydrogen bonding interactions within sheet
- Cooperative stacking

- Slightly weaker hydrogen bonding but cooperative
- Non-cooperative stacking

- Less structural flexibility
- Low hydration

- More structural flexibility
- High hydration

- More stable
- Ideal packing

- Less stable
- Loosely packed



NH₃

NH₃

- I. Rapid formation of an extended H-bond network between surface chains and NH3.
- II. Relative shifting of the layers that in turn leads to the formation of channels orthogonal to the (100) and (-100)
- III. These channels allow NH3 to penetrate into the cellulose fibril

PART IV.

Mechanistic kinetic model for Cellulases

But something odd was noticed about cellulase binding



Free Cel7A (µM)

Shishir Chundawat, GLBRC

How does lower enzyme binding in Cellulose III lead to increase in catalytic activity?

"Increased enzyme binding to substrate is not necessary for more efficient cellulose hydrolysis," D. Gao, S.P.S. Chundawat, A. Sethi, V. Balan, S. Gnanakaran and Bruce E Dale (under review)

Overview of kinetic model for CBH1



This model takes into account adsorption of carbohydrate binding module (CBM) and catalytic domain (CD) individually to the cellulose surface.

In addition to chain ends, CBM can bind to other regions of the cellulose as well (CD cannot do this).

Once CD is adsorbed to the cellulose surface, the cellulose chain can slide into the active site a single glucose unit at a time.

Once a productive enzyme (10 glucose units in active site) is formed, the protein can hydrolyze the cellulose to form product-bound enzyme (P10).

Cellobiose can then undock from the enzyme to form the enzyme bound substrate with 8 glucose units remaining within CD (NP8-CB).

Key Steps in the Model



Binding of enzyme



$$\frac{d[E]}{dt} = -k_{on}^{CBM}[E][C_{fe}] + k_{off}^{CBM}[NP_0] - k_{on}^{CD}[E][C_{fe}] + k_{off}^{CD}[NP_1] - k_{on}^{CBM}[E][C_{inner}] + k_{off}^{CBM}[OP]
\frac{d[OP]}{dt} = k_{on}^{CBM}[E][C_{inner}] - k_{off}^{CBM}[OP]
\frac{d[NP_0]}{dt} = k_{on}^{CBM}[E][C_{fe}] - k_{off}^{CBM}[NP_0] + k_{off}^{CD}[\overline{NP_1}] - \overline{k_{on}^{CD}}[NP_0]$$

Intramolecular binding constants can be upto 100 times greater

A. Sethi, B. Goldstein and S. Gnanakaran. Quantifying intramolecular binding in multivalent interactions. **PLoS Comput. Biol.**, 2011.(10):e1002192.



Sliding of enzyme



Catalytic activity by CBH`



Consider different scenarios for combination of factors that could lead to increase of hydrolysis rate of enzyme simultaneously with decrease in amount of bound enzyme as seen in experiments. only one scenario explains observations

Higher Sliding & Lower Binding Rates in Cellulose III



Only increase in sliding rate with decrease in binding rates of both domains to the surface of cellulose reproduces the observations

Can we implement a more complex kinetic model?



[Eriksson et al., Applied Biochem. and Biotech. 101:41 (2002)]

1) How does the substrate change during hydrolysis?

2) What cellulase cocktails would result in an efficient cellulose degradation?

Coarse-grained Dynamical Models – Enzymatic Degradation

Samples from Agent-based Simulations



Asztalos, A., Daniels, M., Sethi, A., Shen, T., Langan, P., Redondo, A., and Gnanakaran, S., *A coarse-grained model for synergistic action of multiple enzymes on cellulose*, Biotechnology for Biofuels,. 2012 Aug

Current Studies – Enzymatic Degradation



Time=0.000



Results: Endo-enzymes

6

75



Enzymatic Hydrolysis of Cellulose:

Results: Cellulase Cocktails



Summary

Simple mechanistic kinetic model finds

- Sliding rate of CBH1 is faster in Cellulose III
- Binding rate of CBH1 is lower in Cellulose III
- Stochastic model that capture substrate properties during hydroylsis and effect of enzyme cocktail has been developed
 possible 3d extension of the model



Enzymatic Digestion Game



Bullet Physics – heavily used by the game developers

