

# Kinetics of Oxidative Ammonolysis of 4-Bromo-*o*-xylene: IV.<sup>1</sup> Mechanism of Formation of the Reaction Products

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**Abstract**—Generalized kinetic data were used to analyze the mechanism of formation of the oxidative oxidative ammonolysis products 4-bromo-*o*-xylene and 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile.

**Keywords:** ammonolysis, *o*-xylene, nitriles, kinetics

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Previously [1–3] we studied kinetic regularities of vapor-phase catalytic ammonolysis of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene and 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile on a V–Sb–Bi–Zr/ $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> oxide catalyst. In [3], a scheme of the oxidative ammonolysis of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene was proposed (Scheme 1).

Oxidative ammonolysis of aromatic compounds containing *ortho*-methyl groups results in formation of both nitriles and imides as major products [4, 5]. These products are used in manufacturing phthalocyanine pigments and dyes, semiconductor materials, thermally stable polymers, laser dyes, optical filters, and near-IR photosensitizers for photodynamic cancer therapy [6, 7], medicines, chemical plant protection means, indigo dye, vulcanization retarders, stabilizers and fire retardants for plastics, and lubricant additives, as well as in other fields of organic synthesis.

It is important to underlie that the oxidative ammonolysis of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene involves consecutive transformation of, first, the *para*-methyl and then meta-methyl group with respect to the bromine atom [8]. This appears to be explained by electronic factors in the 4-bromo-*o*-xylene molecule. The electronic factors are well consistent with the results of oxidative ammonolysis of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene on the V–Sb–Bi–Zr/ $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> oxide catalyst [2, 3].

In *o*-xylene, the order of activation of its methyl groups is of no matter because of the lack of the third

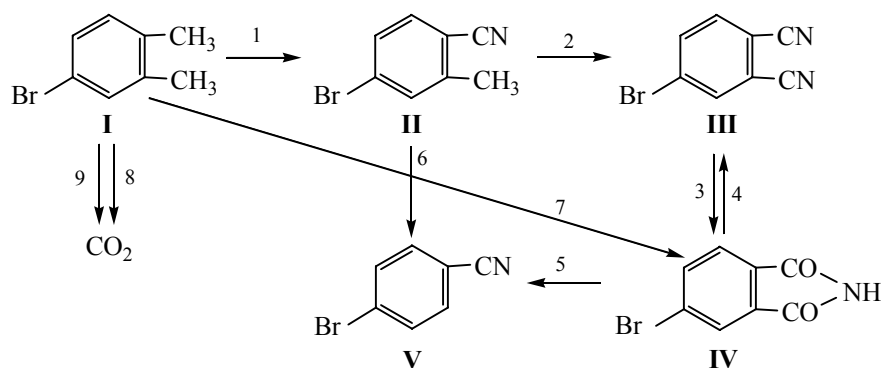
substituent in the benzene ring. Therefore, the activation of one the methyl groups results in exclusive formation of *o*-tolunitrile which, in its turn, undergoes oxidative ammonolysis by the second methyl group [9, 10] to form dinitrile.

The 4-Br atom favors activation of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene on chemisorption [8]. The activation of alkylated aromatic compounds (primary interactions with metal oxide catalysts under oxidative ammonolysis conditions) is accompanied by cleavage of the side-chain C–H bond in the  $\alpha$  position to the aromatic ring [11]. The mechanism of activation under the action of the nucleophilic oxide ion is shown in Scheme 2.

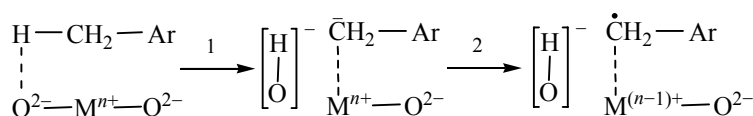
The efficiency of heterolytic dissociation of the methyl C–H bond is provided first of all by the reaction of the O<sup>2–</sup> nucleophile with the outgoing proton. Heterolytic dissociation of C–H bonds also occurs on activation of the second methyl group in 4-bromo-*o*-xylene, as judged from the formation of 4-bromophthalonitrile 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile on the V–Sb–Bi–Zr/ $\gamma$ -Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> catalyst. Thus, the primary interaction of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene with contact surface occurs as an acid–base interaction, i.e. stage 1 (Scheme 2) involves no change of the oxidation state of M<sup>*n*+</sup> and is accompanied by proton abstraction from the substrate molecule (CH acid) on the nucleophilic center of the catalyst to form a surface anion compound [8, 11]. In the case of oxidation reactions whose mechanism includes acid–base stages, more fruitful is the concept

<sup>1</sup> For communication III, see [1].

Scheme 1.



Scheme 2.



of a combined effect of the redox and acid–base characteristics of the surface on the catalytic properties of substances [12]. Oxidative ammonolysis of toluene and its homologs just relates to the mentioned reactions, because the primary interaction of these compounds with the oxide catalyst can be acid–base in nature [11].

The aim of the present work was to discuss the mechanism of oxidative ammonolysis of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene. The mechanism, i.e. the sequence of transformations leading to formation of the target reaction product and by-products, is still unclear even for the simplest and sufficiently well-studied oxidative ammonolysis reactions. As already mentioned, the mechanisms of oxidative ammonolysis reactions forming not only one but also two cyano groups, as well as imido group are even more difficult to study.

The previously discussed mechanism of oxidative ammonolysis of *o*-xylene and *p*-xylene [13], which is consistent with the kinetic regularities observed in each case, showed that the consumption rate of arenes suggested their dissociative adsorption.

According to Scheme 1, the vapor-phase oxidative ammonolysis of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene (I) gives rise to 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile (II), 4-bromophthalonitrile (III), 4-bromophthalimide (IV), 4-bromobenzonitrile (V), and CO<sub>2</sub>. As follows from the experimental data, the rates of formation and consumption of the key components of the oxidative ammonolysis of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene on the V–Sb–Bi–Zr/γ-Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> oxide catalyst at oxygen and

ammonia partial pressures above their minimal values are described by Eqs. (1)–(7).

$$w_1 = k'_1 \sqrt{P_I}, \quad (1)$$

$$w_2 = k'_2 \sqrt{P_{II}}, \quad (2)$$

$$w_3 = k'_3 P_{III} P(\text{H}_2\text{O}) / P(\text{NH}_3), \quad (3)$$

$$w_4 = k'_4 P_{IV} / P(\text{H}_2\text{O}), \quad (4)$$

$$w_5 = k'_5, \quad (5)$$

$$w_6 = k'_6 P_{II} / 1 + a P_I, \quad (6)$$

$$w_9 = k'_9 \sqrt{P_I}. \quad (7)$$

Here  $k'_i$  is the rate constant of the reaction sequence (Scheme 1).

In view of the observed dependence of product distribution on the O<sub>2</sub> and NH<sub>3</sub> concentration ratio at  $P(\text{NH}_3)$  lower than a certain value denoted as  $P(\text{NH}_3)_{\min}$  [3], the rates of the transformation of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene into 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile and of 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile into 4-bromophthalonitrile will take Eqs. (8) and (9), respectively.

$$w_1 = k'_1 \sqrt{P_I} P(\text{NH}_3) / P(\text{NH}_3) + b P(\text{O}_2), \quad (8)$$

$$w_2 = k'_2 \sqrt{P_{II}} P(\text{NH}_3) / P(\text{NH}_3) + b P(\text{O}_2). \quad (9)$$

In the above range of ammonia concentrations, routes 7 and 8 (Scheme 1) appear. Their rates are given by Eqs. (10) and (11).

$$w_7 = k'_1 \sqrt{P_I} b P(\text{O}_2) \beta / P(\text{NH}_3) + b P(\text{O}_2), \quad (10)$$

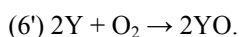
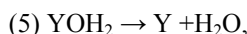
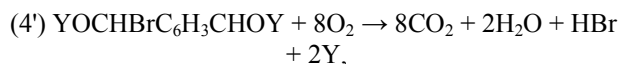
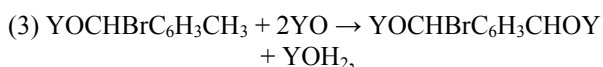
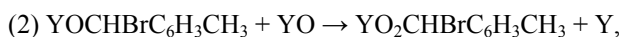
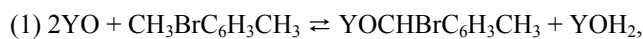
$$w_8 = k'_1 \sqrt{P_I} b P(\text{O}_2) (1 - \beta) / P(\text{NH}_3) + b P(\text{O}_2). \quad (11)$$

Here  $\beta$  is the fraction of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene, which transforms into 4-bromophthalimide at low ammonia concentrations and  $b$  is a constant which reflects the ratio of the absorption equilibrium constants of  $O_2$  and  $NH_3$ .

$$w_{\text{tot}} = w_1 + w_7 + w_8 + w_9 = (k_1 + k_9)\sqrt{P_1}.$$

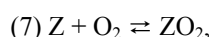
In agreement with Scheme 1,  $w_{\text{tot}}$  is independent on the concentration of  $NH_3$  and described by a half-order equation in 4-bromo-*o*-xylene. Such dependence suggests dissociative adsorption of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene on centers that are completely coated by oxygen at  $P(O_2) > P(O_2)_{\text{min}}$ . The adsorbed fragment of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene is oxidized to  $CO_2$  and  $H_2O$  by route 9 with the probability  $k_9/(k_1 + k_9)$ , forms 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile with the probability  $k_1/(k_1 + k_9)$ , and also forms 4-bromophthalimide,  $CO_2$ , and  $H_2O$  at low  $P(NH_3)$  values. The relative rates of 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile formation by route 1 ( $w_1$ ) and other reaction products by routes 7 and 8 ( $w_7 + w_8$ ) depends on the  $P(NH_3)/P(O_2)$  ratio. This fact, as well as the independence of the rate of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene transformation of  $P(NH_3)$  gives us grounds to suggest that  $NH_3$  and 4-bromo-*o*-xylene are adsorbed on different centers, and, therewith,  $NH_3$  competes for its absorption centers with  $O_2$  and completely expels the latter at high  $P(NH_3)$  values. Obviously, these centers (Z) have a lower oxygen adsorption heat than the adsorption centers of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene (Y).

The above sequence of stages leading to adsorption of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene and its complete oxidation by route 9 can be presented as follows.



Here (1) is an equilibrium stage, primed numbers relate to momentary stages [14], and all other stages are slow.

Oxygen and ammonia equilibrially adsorbed on centers Z completely coat the latter.



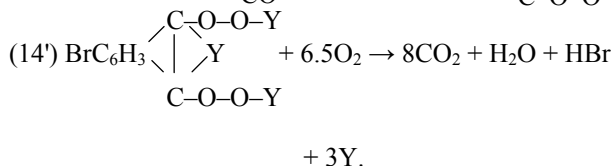
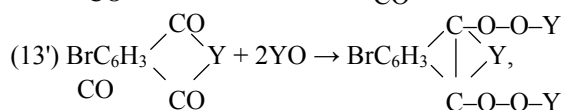
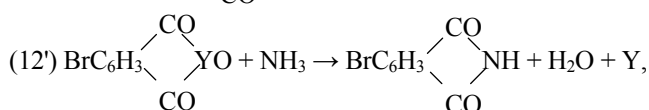
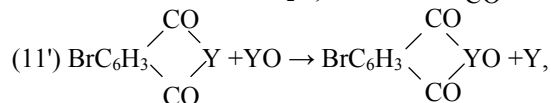
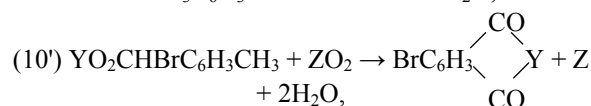
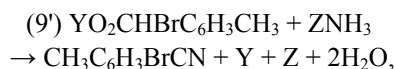
From this  $[ZO_2] + [ZNH_3] = 1$ .

Then the  $O_2$  and  $NH_3$  coatings can be estimated as follows.

$$[ZO_2] = K_7P(O_2)/K_8P(NH_3) + K_7P(O_2) = K_7/K_8P(O_2)/P(NH_3) + K_7/K_8P(O_2),$$

$$[ZNH_3] = K_8P(NH_3)/K_8P(NH_3) + K_7P(O_2) = P(NH_3)/P(NH_3) + K_7/K_8P(O_2).$$

The reaction of  $YO_2CHBrC_6H_3CH_3$  with  $ZNH_3$  forms 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile, whereas the reaction of  $YO_2CHBrC_6H_3CH_3$  with  $ZO_2$  forms either 4-bromophthalimide or  $CO_2$  and  $H_2O$  by routes 7 and 8 (Scheme 1).



Centers Y are only slightly coated by organic fragments.

If the rate of  $YOCHBrC_6H_3CH_3$  consumption at stages (2) and (3) is roughly equal to the rate of  $YOH_2$  consumption at stage (5), the concentrations of these compounds are also equal to each other:  $[YOCHBrC_6H_3CH_3] \approx [YOH_2]$ .

Then from the equilibrium (1) and under the assumption that centers Y are completely coated by oxygen ( $[YO] \approx 1$ ) we obtain Eqs. (12) and (13).

$$K_1 = [YOCHBrC_6H_3CH_3]^2/P_1, \quad (12)$$

$$[YOCHBrC_6H_3CH_3] = \sqrt{K_1}P_1. \quad (13)$$

The rate of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene consumption by route 9 at  $[YO] \approx 1$  and with account for the slow

stage (3), which is rate-limiting at this route, can be found by Eq. (14), and that by routes 1, 7, and 8 at  $[YO] \approx 1$  and with account for the slow stage (2), can be found by Eq. (15).

$$w_9 = k_3[YOCHBrC_6H_3CH_3] = k_3\sqrt{K_1}P_I, \quad (14)$$

$$w_1 + w_7 + w_8 = k_2[YOCHBrC_6H_3CH_3] = k_2\sqrt{K_1}P_I, \quad (15)$$

$$k'_1 = k_2\sqrt{K_1}, k'_9 = k_3\sqrt{K_1}.$$

Here  $k_i$  is the rate constant of the reaction stage.

The  $w_1$  and  $[w_7 + w_8]$  values, taking into account the  $NH_3$  and  $O_2$  coatings which control routes 1, 7, and 8, are given by Eqs. (16) and (17).

$$w_1 = k_2\sqrt{K_1}P_I P(NH_3)/P(NH_3) + K_7/K_8P(O_2), \quad (16)$$

$$w_7 + w_8 = k_2\sqrt{K_1}P_I K_7/K_8P(O_2)/P(NH_3) + K_7/K_8P(O_2), \quad (17)$$

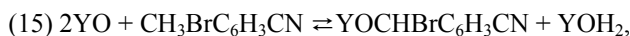
$$b = K_7/K_8.$$

In turn, the rate ratio for routes 7 and 8 are determined by the rate constant ratio for stages (11') and (13').

$$w_7/w_8 = \beta/(1 - \beta) = k_{11'}/k_{13'},$$

$$\beta = k_{11'}/k_{11'} + k_{13'}.$$

4-Bromo-*o*-tolunitrile, like 4-bromo-*o*-xylene, is dissociatively adsorbed on centers Y.



As the rates of  $YOCHBrC_6H_3CN$  and  $YO H_2$  formation at stage (15) are equal to each other, then  $[YOCHBrC_6H_3CN] = [YO H_2]$ .

Therefore, from the equilibrium (15) and under the assumption that centers Y are completely associated with oxygen ( $[YO] \approx 1$ ), we have  $K_{15} = [YOCHBrC_6H_3CN]^2/P_{II}$ , from which  $[YOCHBrC_6H_3CN] = \sqrt{K_{15}P_{II}}$ .

Then the rate of 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile transformation by route 2 at  $[YO] \approx 1$  and with account for the slow stage (16), which is rate-limiting at this route, can be found by Eq. (18).

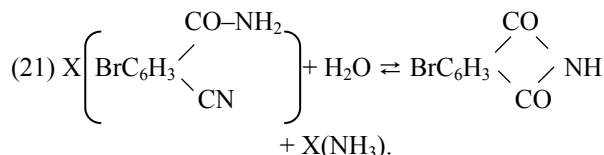
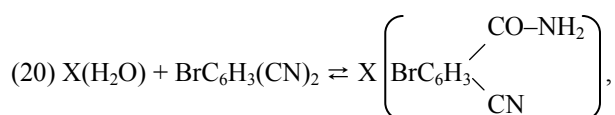
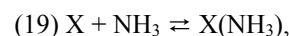
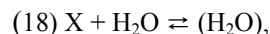
$$w_2 = k_{16}[YOCHBrC_6H_3CN] = k_{16}\sqrt{K_{15}P_{II}}. \quad (18)$$

Taking into account the  $NH$  coating which controls route 2, the reaction rate can be found by Eq. (19).

$$w_2 = k_{16}\sqrt{K_{15}P_{II}} P(NH_3)/P(NH_3) + bP(O_2), \quad (19)$$

$$k'_2 = k_{16}\sqrt{K_{15}}.$$

Analysis of the dependences of the kinetics of 4-bromophthalonitrile hydrolysis and the reverse reaction of 4-bromophthalimide ammonolysis on water and ammonia concentrations shows that these reactions occur at the catalytic centers of a different nature. Ammonia competes with water on these centers, and, moreover, ammonium is adsorbed to a much higher degree than water (the  $NH_3$  coating degree is close to 1).



Here stages (18), (19), and (21) are equilibrium stages, and stage (20) is reversible but not equilibrium.

The water coating is given by Eq. (20).

$$[X(H_2O)] = K_{18}P(H_2O)/K_{19}P(NH_3). \quad (20)$$

Then the rate of the forward reaction by route 3, with account for the rate-limiting stage (20), is calculated by Eq. (21).

$$w_3 = k_{20}P_{III}[X(H_2O)] = k_{20}P_{III}K_{18}P(H_2O)/K_{19}P(NH_3), \quad (21)$$

$$k'_3 = k_{20}K_{18}/K_{19}.$$

The equilibrium constant of stage (21), under the assumption  $[X(NH_3)] \approx 1$ , can be found by Eq. (22).

$$K_{21} = P_{IV}/P(H_2O) \left[ X \left[ BrC_6H_3 \begin{array}{l} \diagup CO-NH_2 \\ \diagdown CN \end{array} \right] \right]. \quad (22)$$

From this the degree of coating with the intermediate compound is found by Eq. (23).

$$\left[ X \left[ BrC_6H_3 \begin{array}{l} \diagup CO-NH_2 \\ \diagdown CN \end{array} \right] \right] = P_{IV}/K_{21}P(H_2O). \quad (23)$$

Then the rate of the reverse reaction by route 4 (ammonolysis of 4-bromophthalimide), with account for the rate-limiting stage (20), can be found by Eq. (24).

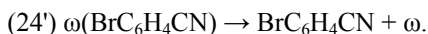
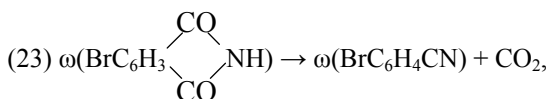
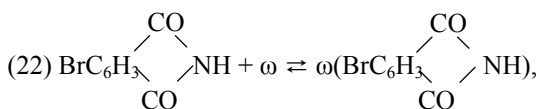
$$w_4 = k_{-20} \left[ X \left[ \text{BrC}_6\text{H}_3 \begin{array}{c} \text{CO-NH}_2 \\ \text{CN} \end{array} \right] \right] = k_{-20} P_{\text{IV}} / K_{21} P(\text{H}_2\text{O}). \quad (24)$$

Consequently,  $k'_4 = k_{-20} / K_{21}$ . In equilibrium,  $w_3 = w_4$ .

Then  $k_{20} K_{18} P_{\text{III}} P(\text{H}_2\text{O}) / K_{19} P(\text{NH}_3) = k_{-20} P_{\text{IV}} / K_{21} P(\text{H}_2\text{O})$ , and the equilibrium constant of 4-bromophthalonitrile hydrolysis can be described by Eq. (25).

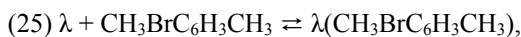
$$\begin{aligned} k_{20} K_{18} K_{21} / K_{19} k_{-20} &= P_{\text{IV}} P(\text{NH}_3) / P_{\text{III}} P^2(\text{H}_2\text{O}) \\ &= K_e = K_3 / K_4. \end{aligned} \quad (25)$$

Judging from the observed kinetic regularities [1, 3], the formation of 4-bromobenzonitrile both from 4-bromophthalimide and from 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile occurs on different centers than oxidative ammonolysis. Such centers may well exist on the surface of a multicomponent catalyst. The character of the kinetic curves for 4-bromophthalimide decarboxylation suggests that this reaction occurs on catalytic centers ( $\omega$ ) coated with imide.



The rate of 4-bromophthalimide consumption by route 5 ( $w_5$ ), with account for the rate-limiting stage (23) and an imide coating close to 1, is equal to  $k_{23}$ . Consequently,  $k'_5 = k_{23}$ .

The formation of 4-bromobenzene by oxidative destruction (demethylation) of 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile is retarded by 4-bromo-*o*-xylene, and, therefore, centers  $\lambda$  are fully coated by 4-bromo-*o*-xylene and 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile adsorbed under equilibrium conditions.

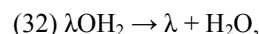
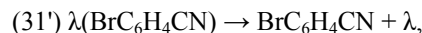
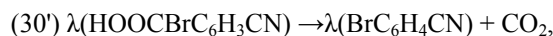
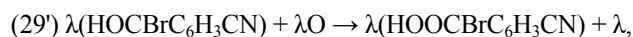
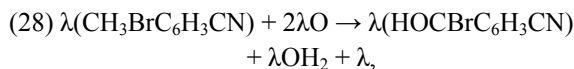
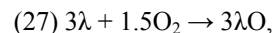


Then the 4-bromo-*o*-xylene and 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile coatings can be found by Eqs. (26) and (27).

$$\begin{aligned} [\lambda(\text{CH}_3\text{BrC}_6\text{H}_3\text{CH}_3)] &= K_{25} P_{\text{I}} / K_{25} P_{\text{I}} + K_{26} P_{\text{II}} \\ &+ K_{25} / K_{26} P_{\text{I}} / K_{25} / K_{26} P_{\text{I}} + P_{\text{II}}, \end{aligned} \quad (26)$$

$$\begin{aligned} [\lambda(\text{CH}_3\text{BrC}_6\text{H}_3\text{CN})] &= K_{26} P_{\text{II}} / K_{26} P_{\text{II}} + K_{25} P_{\text{I}} \\ &= P_{\text{II}} / P_{\text{II}} + K_{25} / K_{26} P_{\text{I}}. \end{aligned} \quad (27)$$

The oxidative destruction of 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile by route 6 can be described by the following reaction sequence.



$$[\lambda(\text{CH}_3\text{BrC}_6\text{H}_3\text{CH}_3)] + [\lambda(\text{CH}_3\text{BrC}_6\text{H}_3\text{CN})] \approx 1.$$

In view of the aforesaid and the fairly low yields of 4-bromobenzonitrile even by routes 5 and 6 (Scheme 1), we can suggest that centers  $\lambda$  are only slightly coated by inorganic fragments [Eq. (28)].

$$[\lambda(\text{CH}_3\text{BrC}_6\text{H}_3\text{CH}_3)] + [\lambda(\text{CH}_3\text{BrC}_6\text{H}_3\text{CN})] \gg [\lambda\text{O}]. \quad (28)$$

From stage (26) for  $[\lambda(\text{CH}_3\text{BrC}_6\text{H}_3\text{CN})]$ , equating the total number of centers to 1, we obtain Eqs. (29) and (30).

$$K_{26} = [\lambda(\text{CH}_3\text{BrC}_6\text{H}_3\text{CN})] / P_{\text{II}}, \quad (29)$$

$$[\lambda(\text{CH}_3\text{BrC}_6\text{H}_3\text{CN})] = K_{26} P_{\text{II}}. \quad (30)$$

Then the rate of consumption of adsorbed 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile  $[\lambda(\text{CH}_3\text{BrC}_6\text{H}_3\text{CN})]$  for the formation of  $\text{BrC}_6\text{H}_4\text{CN}$  at the slow stage 28) is given by Eq. (31).

$$w_6 = k_{28} [\lambda(\text{CH}_3\text{BrC}_6\text{H}_3\text{CN})] = k_{28} K_{26} P_{\text{II}}, \quad (31)$$

$$w_6 = k_{28} K_{26} P_{\text{II}} / 1 + K_{25} / K_{26} P_{\text{I}},$$

$$k'_6 = k_{28} K_{26}, \quad a = K_{25} / K_{26}.$$

Here  $a$  is a constant which reflects the ratio of the adsorption equilibrium constants of 4-bromo-*o*-xylene and 4-bromo-*o*-tolunitrile.

Thus, the kinetic data obtained in [1–3] allow us to discuss only certain characteristic features of the mechanism and to make suggestions concerning surface stages.

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