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Synthesis and characterization of new hybrid decatungstate anions

(CTAB)₄W₁₀O₃₂: Toward heterogeneous Photocatalysis

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Abstract:

In the present study, hybrid decatungstate based photocatalysts, [(C₁₆H₃₃)N(CH₃)₃]₄[W₁₀O₃₂], were synthesized by the reaction of hexadecyltrimethylammonium surfactant (CTAB) and Na₄W₁₀O₃₂.2.6H₂O (W10), with different molar ratio W10:CTAB (1:1 for compound 1 and 1:3 for compound 2). In order to verify that the materials have been formed, FTIR, UV-visible spectroscopy, TGA, XRD, and SEM tests were conducted. Comparing and analyzing the influences of molar ratios on band gap energy, photocatalytic activity, and material morphology is discussed. FTIR spectroscopy showed that CTAB reacted with W10 to produce an insoluble product in aqueous media. According to UV-visible spectroscopy, the hybrid material with a low amount of CTAB absorbs more light in the visible region than the other, with the optical band gap decreasing to 2.42 eV for compound 1. After 7 hours of exposure, both compounds, compound 1 and 2, demonstrated a 46 and 88% degradation of carbamazepine in aqueous solution using UV-visible photocatalysis.

Keywords: Hybrid decatungstate, heterogeneous photocatalysis, carbamazepine, water purification.

1. Introduction

- Polyoxometalates (POMs) are metal-oxide species built from pseudo-octahedral MO₆ (M=V,
- Nb, Mo, W) units sharing corners and/or edge with the metal is in its higher oxidation degree.

Recently, POMs attracted a lot of attention for their promising proprieties in many application fields: catalysis and photocatalysis [1–6], biology [7] and medicine [8]. The POMs showed good redox reversibility, producing colored mixed-valence species while maintaining their structural integrity [9]. Among these POMs is decatungstate ion W₁₀O₃₂⁴, which is an isopolytungstate with a metal-oxide framework without any internal heteroatoms or heteroions. It has been widely used as a homogenous photocatalysts [10–12] for organic reactions and organic pollutant degradation in water [10,13–15], because of its interesting physical properties such as, high surface charge density and strongly basic oxygen surfaces. Otherwise, the research on isopolyacids is still limited, while most of the research papers in POMs area are focused on the heteropolyacids [16–18]. Research efforts have been concentrated on wastewater treatement using PMOs through advanced oxidation processes over the past few years. These materials can be used to replace conventional semi-conductors photocatalysts, which suffer from photo-corrosion and limited visible light absorption [19]. Moreover, in decatung tate system, the reactive species has a quite long lifetime (τ_{wO} of 65 ± 5 ns) [20] and are formed with a high quantum yield (Φ_{wO} is 0.57). Nevertheless, decatungstate is highly soluble in aqueous solutions, which limits their potential application in heterogeneous photocatalysis, and consequently, heterogenization of decatungstate remains an appealing challenge for researchers. There are various strategies to incorporate decatungstate in solid support materials among them SiO₂[21–25], ZrO₂[26,27], TiO₂[28] and γ-Al₂O₃[29]. However, these composites revealed to be instable under irradiation and their activity limited due to the release of photoactive species in solution. Considering the very high photoactivity of decatungstate [30] it appeared sometimes difficult to attribute the observed efficiency to the heterogenous or homogeneous photocatalysis phenomenon. As result, solubility control was shown to be a key aspect of POM chemistry and application. The use of organic surfactant as hexadecyltrimethylammonium (CTAB) for POMs heterogenization was recently reported [31], and the hybrid materials obtained were structurally characterized without any application studies [32-34]. The CTAB cationic surfactant is very in water and environmentally friendly compounds, making it an ideal candidate for decatungstate heterogenization. The aim of this work is to synthesize new water-insoluble heterogeneous decatungstate based photocatalysts, determine their structural properties and assess their photocatalytic activity through pollutant degradation. Carbamazepine(CBZ) was chosen as a pharmaceutical pollutant model for two reasons: (i) the use of classical dyes that are inappropriate for photocatalytic activity studies under visible light [35,36] (ii) CBZ in one of the most common pollutant

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- detected in wastewater and its elimination has been extensively studied [37–41], (iii) CBZ is
- 70 almost photostable under visible light irradiation. Considering that the leaching of
- decatungstate is also one of our main concerns, we focused on a simple test that could be used
- as a standard one to test for hybrid materials based on decatungstate.

2. Experimental section

2.1.Materials and Methods

2.1.1. Chemicals

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- All Chemical reagents, hydrochloric acid (HCl; 37% purity), sodium chloride (NaCl; 99%
- purity), acetonitrile (CH₃CN; 99.5% purity) and Hexadecyltrimethylammonium bromide
- 78 (CTAB, 96% purity) were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich except sodium tungstate dihydrate
- 79 (Na₂WO₄.2H₂O₅,99% purity) purchased form CARLO ERBA. All chemicals were used without
- 80 further purification.

81 **2.1.2.** Characterization equipment

- FTIR spectra were acquired in transmission mode in the 4000–400 cm⁻¹ spectral range using an
- ABB Bomen FTLA200 spectrometer and KBr pellet technique. Spectra of 16 scans were
- recorded in air atmosphere with a resolution of 16 cm⁻¹. Thermogravimetric analysis (TGA)
- was performed under air atmosphere using TGA Q500 (TA 1000) equipment. The specimens
- 86 (approximately 20 mg) were weight in Platinum crucible. The samples were heated at a rate of
- 5°C.min⁻¹ from ambient temperature to 1000°C. The powder XRD data were collected on a
- Philips diffractometer, using Cu Kα radiation from 5° to 80° (2θ) with 0.02° step. The UV-
- visible solid-state absorption spectra were recorded from a sample powder in quartz cell 1 mm-
- diameter on a Perkin Elmer Lambda 1050 UV/Visible/NIR instrument from 200 to 800 nm with
- 91 1 nm step and a 150 InGaAs mm-diameter integrating sphere. The surface morphology of
- 92 materials was analysed using High-resolution Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) with
- 93 BRUKER-QUANTAX FEI instrument operated at 200 keV.

94 **2.1.3. Photocatalytic experiments**

- The experiments were conducted with a LOT Quantum Xenon Lamp system (300 W) equipped
- 96 with a 90° beam turner whose emission was filtered by a water and atmospheric filter (LOT
- 97 Quantum Design LSZ231 and LSZ176) to deliver a wavelength ranged between 290-800 nm.
- 98 A photocatalyst sample of 30 mg was suspended in 50 mL of an aqueous solution of
- Carbamazepine (**CBZ**) at 1×10^{-4} mol.L⁻¹. After 1 hour stirring in the dark at room temperature
- 100 (25°C), the adsorption/desorption equilibrium was reached. The mixture was then placed in a

- reactor (pyrex glass), and continuously stirred throughout the experiment. Mixture and reactor
- were kept at 20 °C by water flow [41].

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2.1.4. HPLC and LC MS analysis of CBZ

- 104 The concentration of CBZ was determined by liquid chromatography apparatus (UPLC
- PerkinElmer Altus 30) equipped with an Eclipse Plus C18 (3.5 μm; 2.5 × 150 mm) and a
- 220/240 pump, a 330-diode array UV-visible detector, a 363-fluorescence detector and a 410-
- automatic injector. An isocratic method was set at a flow rate of 0.25 mL.min⁻¹ and the injected
- 108 volume was equal to 10 μL. The separation was obtained using a 65:35 ratio of
- water/acetonitrile (with 0.1% formic acid) and the wavelength of absorption used for detection
- was 285 nm. Before injection, samples were systematically filtered on a 0.2 μm cellulosic filter
- of 15 mm in diameter (Agilent Technologies) to remove the photocatalyst ensuring that CBZ
- was not retained on the filter.
- 113 Identification of carbamazepine degradation products was performed (LC-MS QTOF), using
- Agilent 1290. The source parameters were established as follows: fragmenter: 140 V, capillary
- voltage: 3000 V, skimmer 65 V, nebulizer pressure (30 psi), nebulizer needle voltage (500 V),
- nitrogen was used as desolvation gas (temperature 350°C, flow rate 10 L.min⁻¹), and the flow
- rates for the sheath gas were set at 350°C and 8 L.min⁻¹ respectively.

2.2.Synthesis of materials

119 **2.2.1.** Synthesis of Na₄W₁₀O₃₂. xH₂O

- Na₄W₁₀O₃₂.xH₂O (**W10**) was prepared following literature procedures [42] with large
- modifications. First, a boiled aqueous solution of Na₂WO₄.2H₂O (66 g in 400 mL) and HCl (1
- M in 400 mL) were mixed for 20 seconds under strong stirring, then the mixture was cooled
- rapidly to 0°C. When the temperature has reached 30°C, an excess of NaCl salt was added to
- the mixture and at 0°C, a precipitate was formed. This precipitate was filtered and dried in
- vacuum and about 33 g of light-yellow solid were collected and placed for one night in freezer
- at -3°C. After dissolving the solid in hot acetonitrile (200 mL for 33 g of the solid formed), the
- solution was boiled for 2 to 3 minutes, and filtering was performed. A white solid residue
- 128 containing predominantly sodium chloride was collected and the yellow-green solution (the
- filtrate) was evaporated at 25°C to obtain a yellow-green powder.
- 2.2.2. Synthesis of $[(C_{16}H_{33})N(CH_{3})_{3}]_{4}[W_{10}O_{32}]$ hybrid materials. A 20 mL of aqueous
- solution of decatungstate **W10** (2.44 g, 1 mmol) was added dropwise to 20 mL of aqueous
- solution of **CTAB** at different concentration (0.36 g (1 mmol) for **compound 1** and 1.08 g (3
- mmol) for **compound 2**) under vigorous stirring. The mixture was refluxed at 100°C for 1 hour.

A pale-yellow precipitate was obtained for **compound 1**, and a white precipitate for **compound**

2. The precipitates were washed and filtered three-times with hot water and then dried overnight

136 at 100°C.

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3. Results and discussion

3.1. Materials Characterization

To further establish the formation of hybrid materials, FT-IR spectral measurements were 141 carried out. The representative results are shown in Figure 1. The FT-IR spectrum of W10 142 shows the well-known absorptions bands of decatungstate [43,44]. The absorption band at 143 424.3 cm⁻¹ is assigned to W-O-W scissoring, the others at 578.6, 771.47, 833.18 and 902.62 144 cm⁻¹ are assigned to W-O_{corner-shard}-W and W-O_{edge-shard}-W stretching in the decatungstate 145 framework, and the intense band at 964.33 cm⁻¹ is assigned to the stretching of W=O_{terminal} 146 [42,45–47]. Two bands are well resolved for the bending vibrations of water. The highest 147 frequency band in the $\delta(HOH)$ vibrations range, at 1658 cm⁻¹, corresponds to the weakly bonded 148 waters, however the band at 1627 cm⁻¹ belongs to coordinated water molecules but with a 149 weaker coordination bond [48]. A band was observed within 3500 cm⁻¹ for stretching vibrations 150 of water v(OH), corresponding to coordinated water molecules. We carried out a 151 thermogravimetric analysis to determine how many water molecules were chemisorbed and 152 physisorbed. Thus, we counted about 2.6 structural water molecules in each cluster. 153 On the FT-IR spectrum of CTAB molecule the strong absorption at 2847, 2916 and 3016 cm⁻¹ 154 155

respectively originated from C-H stretching vibration of methyl and methylene groups of CTAB. The absorption bands at 1481 and 1434 cm⁻¹ for pure hexadecyltrimethylammonium surfactant were due to the asymmetric and symmetric -C-H vibration of the quaternary ammonium group [44,49–51].

The FT-IR spectra of compounds 1 and 2 are similar with the characteristic's absorption bands

The FT-IR spectra of compounds **1** and **2** are similar with the characteristic's absorption bands of W10 and CTAB. This confirms that CTAB have successfully reacted with W10. The compounds **1** and **2** also bear the symmetric and asymmetric $-(CH_2)$ vibrations, which indicates the direct non-involvement of hydrocarbon chains in the reaction leading to the formation of compounds **1** and **2**. Additionally, the band at 1481 cm⁻¹ was broadened and shifted to 1465 cm⁻¹ and the peak at 1434 cm⁻¹ was not present, which suggest that hybrid materials influenced the quaternary ammonium group vibrations. In the stretching vibration

region at 3448 cm⁻¹, a broad and less intense band was observed. This corresponds to adsorbed water molecules [52].

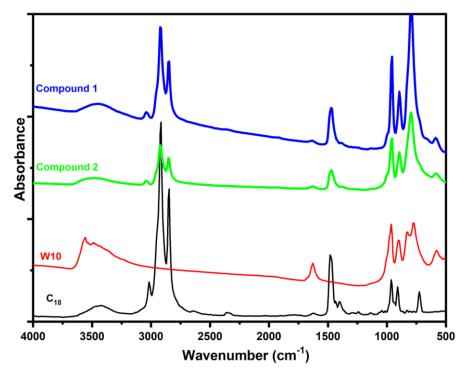


Figure 1: FT-IR spectra of W10, CTAB and hybrid materials (compound 1 and 2).

To investigate the thermal stability and establishing the chemical formula of compound 1 and 2, a series of TGA experiments were carried out. The thermogravimetric analysis (figure 2), reveals that both compounds have almost similar thermal behaviour. Two main steps are observed in TGA for the decomposition process under air atmosphere. A first step ends at approximately 375 °C, and the second step is completed at approximately at 500°C. This represents a total weight loss of 34 and 31% for compound 1 and 2 respectively, which corresponds to the loss of 4 CTAB molecules.

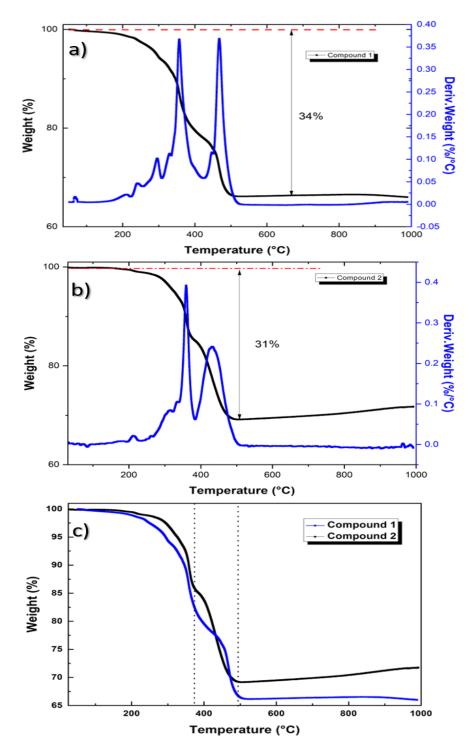


Figure 2: TGA curves of compound 1 (a) and compound 2 (b) and comparative curves (c).

Additionally, compound 2 decomposes at almost 50°C higher than the compound 1, which is a reliable indicator of its stability. The relatively high thermal stability of compound 2 ought to be attributed to the high crystallinity in comparison with compound 1 which is confirmed by XRD analysis in figure 3a. On the other hand, this temperature shift might be also due to encapsulation of CTAB ions, or strong interaction between CTAB and W10 [53,54]. In addition, it is important to note that the powder diffraction pattern (figure 3b) collected from a

solid's residue after TGA experiments for both compounds, confirms the formation of tungsten trioxide (WO₃). Assuming the decomposition reaction (Eq.1), it can be shown that the observed weight loss nearly precisely corresponds to x:y ratio 4:10. Thus, the chemical composition of both compounds is $(C_{19}H_{42}N)_4W_{10}O_{32}$.

$$(C_{19}H_{42}N)_aW_bO_c + \frac{117}{4}a O_2 \rightarrow bWO_3 + 19aCO_2 + \frac{a}{2}N_2 + 21aH_2O (z = \frac{6b+a}{2}) (Eq.1)$$

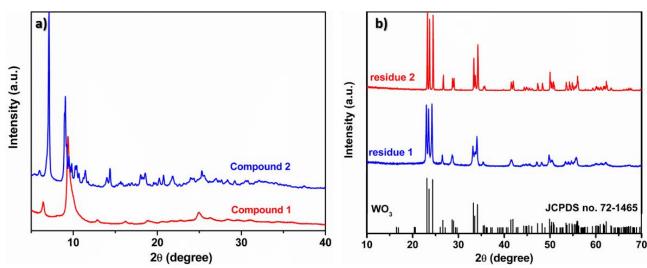


Figure 3. XRD patterns of (a) compound 1 and 2 and (b) TGA residues.

The morphology and microstructure of W10, compound 1 and 2 was investigated by scanning Electronic Microscopy (SEM). Figure 4.a shows images of W10, which is constituted by parallelepiped crystals of different sizes, the biggest ones having a $11\times3\times2.84~\mu m$ size. These parallelepiped crystals resulted from the aggregation of smaller building blocks of about $3.5\times1~\mu m$ size.

The insertion of CTAB into the structure leads to morphological changes attested by the presence of edge-like aggregate with range size of 760-940 nm (Fig.4.b). With a higher concentration of CTAB (Fig.4.c), the structure is characterized by the discrete grains of layer particles with size in the range 6.61 to 8.5 µm. These observations suggest that the size and the morphology of the hybrid materials are different from W10, which indicates, that the use of CTAB molecules as a heterogenization agent give rise to a complete change in the morphology state of the hybrid materials. In fact, the shape and grain size of hybrid materials changed when the CTAB concentration was varied using water as reaction solvent. For compound 1, as the concentration of CTAB was close to the critical micelle concentration (CMC = 0,9 mmol in water), only a low amount of spherical CTAB micelles were formed leading to small size aggregates. On the contrary, with a 4 mM CTAB concentration, much more CTAB micelles are

formed and lead to lamellar phases. The aggregation reached 6.84 μ m, with a distinct layered appearance. That indicates the formation of lamellar system which agrees with other study [55].

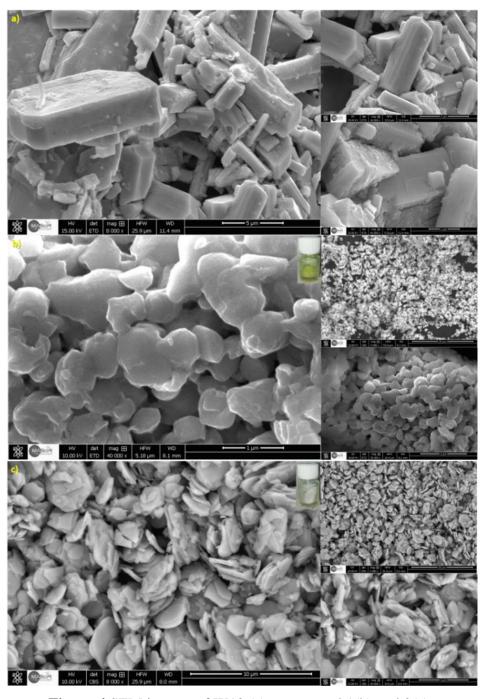


Figure 4 SEM images of W10 (a), compound 1(b) and 2(c).

To understand the colour difference (green vs white) between the two hybrid compounds, their optical properties were investigated.

The UV-visible absorption spectra of W10, compound 1 and 2, presented on figure 5.a., show a large absorption band in UV region. The maximum of absorption is located at 310 and 318

nm for W10 and compound **2**, respectively while for compound **1**, this band broadens in the visible region until 520 nm. The observed bands for the three compounds are typical to decatungstate [46] and are coming from HOMO-LUMO Transition Ligand to Metal Charge Transfer (LMCT) and more precisely to the bridging oxygen-to-tungsten charge transfer [56].

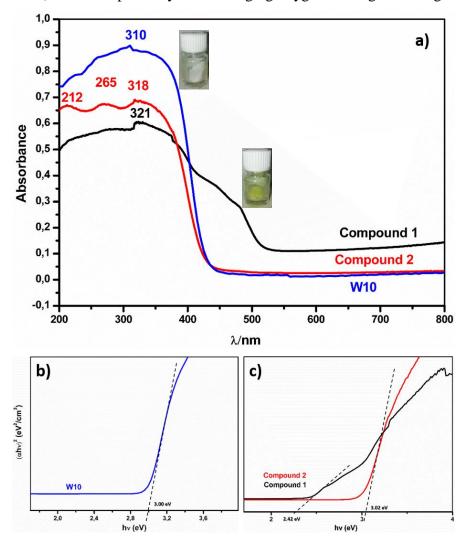


Figure 5. a) UV-Vis absorption spectra of W10, Compound 1 and 2. b) and c) K-M function vs energy (eV).

To estimate the optical band gap energy $E_g(eV)$, UV-Visible spectrum was converted to Kubelka-Munk function $\alpha hv = A(hv-E_g)^{n/2}$ and plotted against energy in eV (figure 5.b and 5.c), where α is the absorption coefficient, ν is the light frequency. A is a constant and n is the transition nature characteristic, which is estimated as a direct transition (n=1). The band gap energy E_g can be defined as the intersection between the energy axis and the linear portion of the Kubelka-Munk function plot [19,57]. Thus, the band gap energy is equal to 3 eV for W10, 2.42 for compound 1 and 3.02 eV for compound 2. These values suggest the promising optical proprieties of our hybrids for visible-light photocatalysis, especially compound 1. This

demonstrates that the use of CTAB molecules as heterogenization agent allow the previous change in the morphology but also the modification of the optical gap energy.

2.2. Photocatalytic Study

In order to evaluate the photocatalytic activities of compound 1 and 2, a solution of CBZ (1×10⁻⁴ mol L⁻¹) was irradiated by UV-visible light from 300 W Xe Lamp in the absence and presence of the photocatalysts. It is worth noting that no direct photodegradation of CBZ is observed as shown in figure 6.a. On the other hand, in the presence of photocatalysts (30 mg), the degradation of CBZ were 45.65 and 88.14% after 7 hours of irradiation for compound 1 and 2 respectively (figure 6.a). The kinetics of CBZ photodegradation by compound 1 and 2 fit with pseudo-first-order equation as presented in figure 6.b. The apparent kinetic constants (k_{app}) of 1 and 2 under UV-Visible light irradiation are 7.83 10⁻² and 2.89 10⁻¹ h⁻¹ respectively. The result indicates that despite the small optical gap energy of compound 1, its efficiency was lower than compound 2 as observed previously by Zhao et al. for other hybrid polyoxometalates [58]. In fact, as the band gap of compound 1 is narrower than that of compound 2, this is less favourable to charge separation [58]. Consequently, the production of free hydroxyl radicals is reduced and the induced photodegradation of organic compounds is decreased [59].

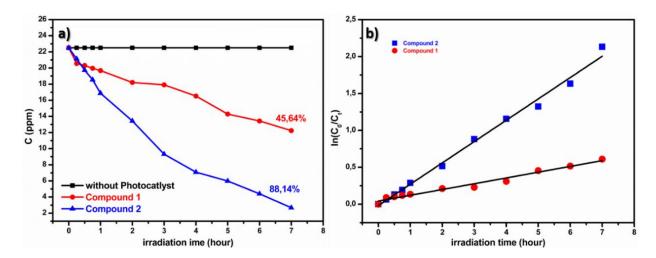


Figure 3: a) Concentration evolution of CBZ under UV irradiation without photocatalyst and with compound 1 and 2. b) Kinetics equation of CBZ photodegradation by compound 1 and 2.

The hydroxyl radicals could be formed as follows: after absorption of photons, decatungstate is excited with the formation of a charge transfer excited-state $(W_{10}O_4^{4-})^*$, which decays to a very reactive non-emissive transient species [60]. This species oxidizes water molecules to form

hydroxyl radicals (*OH) and a reduced decatungstate [61]. The reduced decatungstate being reoxidized by O₂ to form again decatungstate and peroxy radicals (HO₂*). This cycle is illustrated
on figure 7, takes place continuously as long as the system is aerated and exposed to light. The
formed free radicals, especially *OH, can degrade and mineralize CBZ its intermediates
following a well-known pathway [62–65]. Because of the good efficiency of compound 2, we
have chosen its kinetics to elucidate carbamazepine degradation pathway; table 1 lists possible
structures of identified degradation products and their empirical formula and figure 8 illustrate
the mechanism of photodegradation. According to radicals formation mechanism; (*OH) and
*HO₂ are the majority radicals present on solution, and are responsible of the degradation of
carbamazepine and the formation of photoproducts (Figure 8). Indeed, and as a result of
hydroxylation of CBZ an early-stage products P3 and P4 were observed, P3 in its turn gives
birth to P7 by epoxy bond cleavage. Thereafter, another hydroxylation takes place to give P2.
While the loss of -COH and -NH₂ from P4 structure give birth of P1 and P5 [62]. Another
pathway could be proposed for P4 from P3 via rearrangement [62]. Thereafter, hydroxylation
of P5 give P6 as a stable product [62,66].

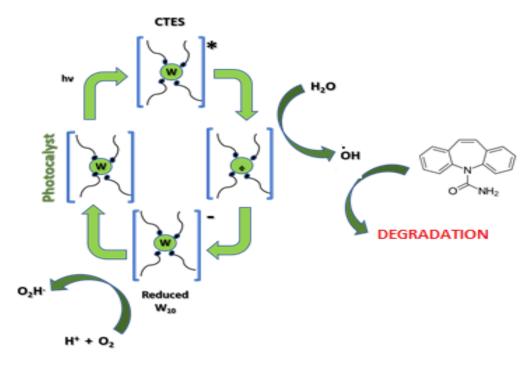


Figure 4. Proposed formation mechanism of free hydroxyl radicals by (CTA)₄W₁₀O₃₂.

 Table 1: Possible structures of identified degradation products and their empirical formula.

Compound	Retention time (min)	[M+H] ⁺ m/z	Formula	Proposed structure	Ref
CBZ	4.3	237.1025	C ₁₅ H ₁₂ N ₂ O	O C NH ₂	
P1	1.2	224.0706	C ₁₄ H ₉ NO ₂	J. H.	[41]
P2	2.8	271.1077	C ₁₅ H ₁₄ N ₂ O ₃	HO OH NH2	[41,66, 67]
Р3	3.06	253.098	C ₁₅ H ₁₂ N ₂ O ₂	H ₂ N C	[67,68]
P4	3.4	253.098	C ₁₅ H ₁₂ N ₂ O ₂	O C H	[68]
P5	3.4	180.0807	C ₁₃ H ₉ N		[41]
P6	3.6	196.0762	C ₁₃ H ₉ NO	O NEW YORK OF THE PROPERTY OF	[41]
P7	4.1	253.098	C ₁₅ H ₁₂ N ₂ O ₂	H OH OH NH ₂	[66,67, 69,70]

CBZ

$$H_2N$$
 P_3
 P_4
 P_4
 P_4
 P_5
 P_1
 P_5
 P_1
 P_2
 P_4
 P_4
 P_5
 P_5
 P_6

Figure 8: Carbamazepine photo-degradation pathway over compound 2 photo-catalyst.

Leaching Test

The leaching of decatungstate is one of the major drawbacks, which limits the application of the hybrid POM materials. To evidence this process, a simple test was carried out at the end of each photocatalytic experiment. The photocatalyst was filtered from the solution and a drop of ethanol was added to the filtrate and then exposed to UV light. It is well-known that in presence of ethanol and under irradiation, anionic decatungstate $(W_{10}O_{32}^{4-})$ is transformed into reduced decatungstate $(W_{10}O_{32}^{5-})$ characterized by a blue colour as shown for W10 on figure 9 (a). This test allows us to study qualitatively the presence of anionic decatungstate in solution after photocatalytic experiment. In figure 9 (b and c), the absence of a blue colour proved the excellent stability of compounds 1 and 2.

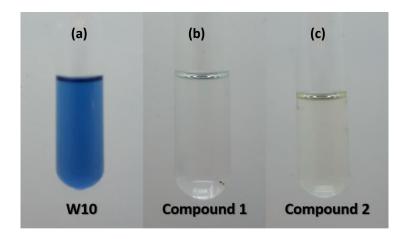


Figure 9. Leaching Tests: In leaching case, the filtrate colour must be change to blue indicating characteristic of $W_{10}O_{32}^{5-}$

Conclusion

In this study water-insoluble decatungstate based hybrid materials were synthesised in aqueous media by the reaction of decatungstate anion and a hexadecyltrimethylammonium surfactant (CTAB) using different molar ratio (1:1 for compound 1 and 1:3 for compound 2). TGA and FT-IR spectroscopy reveals the similar elemental composition of both compounds. UV-Visible spectroscopy and SEM shows the different band gap energy (2.42 eV for 1 and 3.02 eV for 2) and the morphology. These materials are used as a photocatalysts for carbamazepine degradation under UV-visible light irradiation. Both compounds exhibit an interesting photocatalytic activity especially compound 2 and an excellent chemical stability. Using surfactant as heterogenization agent for polyoxometalate appears to be a promising strategy for heterogeneous photocatalysis application.

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