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### Authors

Kaiser, R.I.  
Lee, Yuan T.  
Suits, Arthur G.

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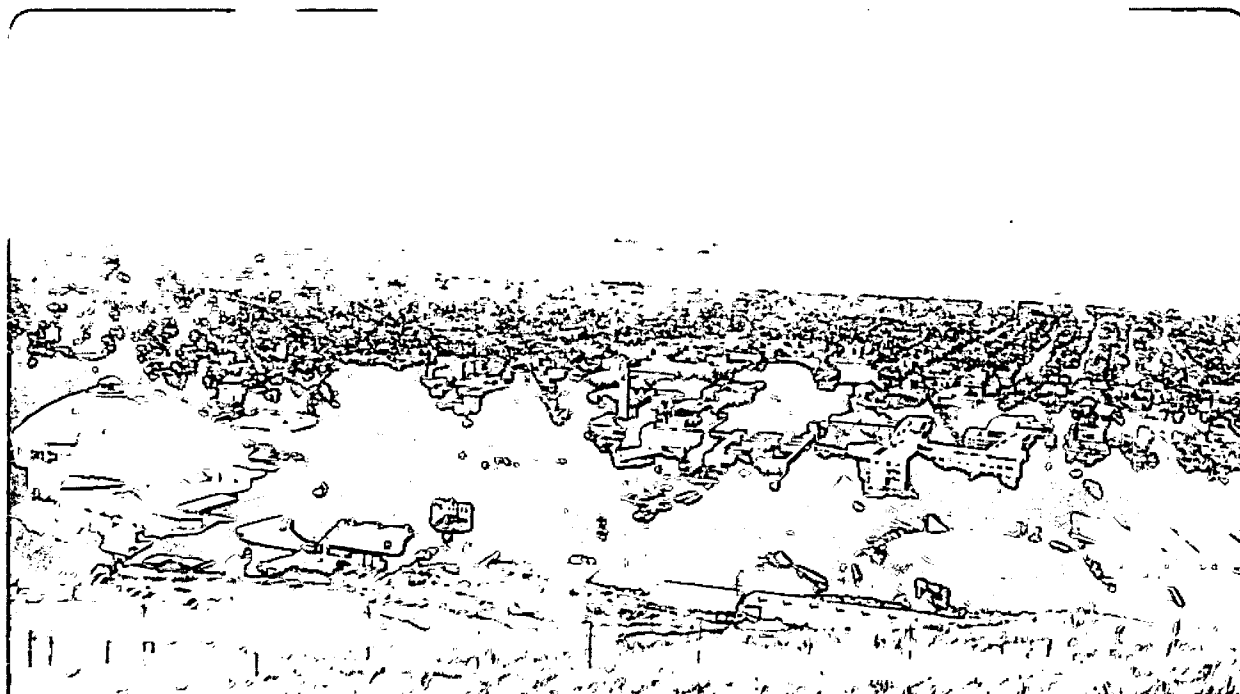
## CHEMICAL SCIENCES DIVISION

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**Crossed Beam Reaction of  $C(^3P_j)$  with  $C_2H_2(^1\Sigma_g^+)$ : Observation of  
Tricarbon-Hydride  $C_3H$**

R.I. Kaiser, Y.T. Lee, and A.G. Suits\*

Department of Chemistry  
University of California

and

Chemical Sciences Division  
Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory  
University of California  
Berkeley, California 94720

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\*To whom the correspondence should be addressed.

# Crossed beam reaction of $C(^3P_j)$ with $C_2H_2(^1\Sigma_g^+)$ : observation of tricarbon-hydride $C_3H$

R.I. Kaiser, Yuan T. Lee, and Arthur G. Suits\*

Department of Chemistry, University of California and Chemical Sciences Division, Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, Berkeley, California, 94720

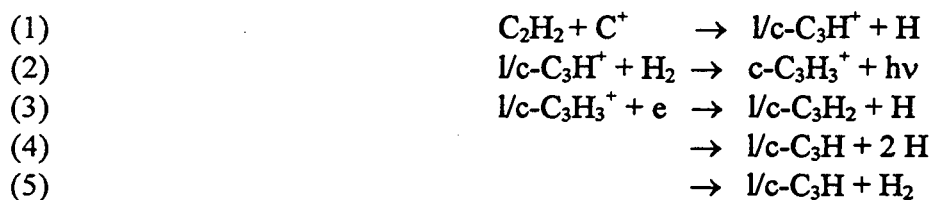
## ABSTRACT

The reaction between ground state carbon atoms,  $C(^3P_j)$ , and acetylene,  $C_2H_2(^1\Sigma_g^+)$ , was studied at an average collision energy of  $(8.4\pm 0.3)$   $\text{kJmol}^{-1}$  using the crossed molecular beam technique. The product angular distribution and time-of-flight spectra of  $m/z = 37$ , i.e.  $C_3H$ , were recorded. Only  $m/z = 37$  was detected, but no signal from the thermodynamically accessible  $C_3(^1\Sigma_g^+) + H_2(^1\Sigma_g^+)$  channel. Forward-convolution fitting of the results yielded a center-of-mass angular flux-distribution forward scattered in respect to the carbon beam, whereas the translational energy flux distribution peaked at only  $(5.4\pm 1.2)$   $\text{kJmol}^{-1}$ , suggesting a simple C-H-bond-rupture to  $H + C_3H$ . The reaction likely proceeds on the triplet surface with an entrance barrier to the  $C_3H_2$ -PES of  $< (8.4\pm 0.3)$   $\text{kJmol}^{-1}$  via addition of the carbon-atom to two bonding  $\pi$ -orbitals located both at C1 or at C1 and C2 of the acetylene molecule. The explicit identification of  $C_3H$  product under single collision conditions strongly demands incorporation of atom-neutral reactions in reaction networks simulating chemistry in the interstellar medium and in outflows of carbon stars.

\* To whom the correspondence should be addressed.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Chemical reactions of atomic carbon in its electronic ground state  $C(^3P_j)$  are of major importance in combustion processes [1-3], hydrocarbon syntheses [1-3], and interstellar chemistry [4-7]. In the interstellar medium (ISM), i.e. the matter between the stars of our galaxy [2-3], isomers of  $C_3H$  and  $C_3H_2$ , i.e. propynylidyne (linear- $C_3H$ ) /cyclopropynylidyne (cyclo- $C_3H$ ) and cyclopropenylidene/propargylene, are among the most abundant molecules, with number densities  $\approx 10^{-8}$  relative to  $H_2$ . Current reaction-networks explain their formation via elaborate, multiple ion-molecule reactions [8, 9]:



This approach, however, neither reproduces column densities, isomer ratios, nor isotope enrichments [8]. In addition, the exact electron density necessary for dissociative recombinations (3-5) can only be estimated within two orders of magnitude. Furthermore, not all cross sections of ion-molecule reactions are experimentally accessible, but rather approximated as Langevin cross sections, i.e. exothermic ion-molecule reactions proceed within orbiting cross section [10]. Recently, however, entrance barriers for several exothermic reactions were determined to ca.  $4 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$  at 293 K [11]. The role of ion-molecule reactions in interstellar formation of some of these species is thus open to question. The possibility of generation of  $C_3H$  from neutral reactants, e.g. ,  $C(^3P_j) + C_2H_2(^1\Sigma_g^+)$  has not been considered in the past. This single step mechanism does not require a protracted chain of successive collisions under conditions with reactant number densities between  $10^{-3}$  and  $10^{-4} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ .

In order to demonstrate the importance of reactions of neutral species, systematic experiments need to be carried out to probe the detailed mechanism and dynamics of such atom-neutral and radical-

radical reactions as  $C(^3P_j) + C_2H_x$  and  $CH(^2\Pi_{1/2}) + C_2H_x$  ( $x = 1, 2, 3, 4$ ). In our communication, we focus on the reaction  $C(^3P_j) + C_2H_2(^1\Sigma_g^+)$  studied under single collision conditions as provided in crossed beam experiments. These detailed insights in the reaction dynamics reveal possible reaction pathways to  $C_3H$ -isomers as well as valuable information on the  $C_3H^-$ , and  $C_3H_2$  potential energy surfaces (PES) and hitherto undetermined enthalpy of formations of l- and c- $C_3H$ .

## II. EXPERIMENT AND DATA PROCESSING

The experiments were performed with a universal crossed molecular beam apparatus described in [12] in detail. Briefly, a pulsed supersonic carbon beam was generated via laser ablation of graphite at 266 nm [13]. The 30 Hz,  $(40\pm 2)$  mJ output of a Spectra Physics GCR 270-30 Nd-YAG laser is focused onto a rotating graphite rod with a 1000 mm focal length UV-grade fused silica lens to a spot of  $(0.5\pm 0.05)$  mm diameter. Ablated carbon-atoms are subsequently seeded into neon gas released by a Proch-Trickl pulsed valve operating at 60 Hz, 80  $\mu$ s pulses, and 4 atm backing pressure. Densities of  $(0.7\pm 0.3)\cdot 10^{13}$  C-atoms  $cm^{-3}$  in the interaction region are achieved. A chopper wheel mounted 40 mm after the laser ablation zone accomplishes selecting a 7  $\mu$ s segment of the carbon-pulse. The pulsed carbon beam with a velocity  $v = (1177\pm 3)$   $ms^{-1}$  and speed ratio  $S = (6.4\pm 0.05)$  and continuous acetylene beam ( $v = (866\pm 7)$   $ms^{-1}$ ,  $S = (9.3\pm 0.1)$ ,  $(563\pm 6)$  torr backing pressure) pass through skimmers with apertures of 1.0 mm and 0.58 mm and cross at  $90^\circ$  in the interaction region.

The scattered species were monitored using a triply differentially pumped detector consisting of a Brink-type electron-impact-ionizer [14], quadrupole mass-filter, and a Daly ion detector [15] in  $2.5^\circ$  steps between  $7.5^\circ$  and  $67.5^\circ$  with respect to the carbon beam. The electron energy was optimized to 200 eV with an emission current of 8.5 mA.

Information on the reaction dynamics is extracted from the TOF-spectra and the laboratory angular distribution by using a forward-convolution technique [18]. This iterative approach initially guesses the angular flux-distribution in the center-of-mass-(COM) coordinate system,  $T(\theta_C)$ , and the translational energy flux-distribution in the COM-system,  $P(E_T)$  assumed to be independent of each other, and convolutes over the experimental parameters to obtain simulations of the experimental result.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The thermochemistry of  $C(^3P_j) + C_2H_2(^1\Sigma_g^+)$  opens two energetically accessible product channels, i.e.  $C_3H + H$  and  $C_3 + H_2$ . Reaction to  $C_3$  in its  $^1\Sigma_g^+$  electronic ground state is exothermic by  $129 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$ , and has to proceed via inter-system-crossing from the initial triplet- to singlet surface. Unfortunately, the  $C_3H$ -enthalpies of formation and relative stabilities of linear/cyclic isomers are not known. Simple additivity rules estimate  $C(^3P_j) + C_2H_2(^1\Sigma_g^+) \rightarrow C_3H + H$  to be exothermic  $69 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$ . Nevertheless, this value is not consistent with the acetylenic like C-H-bond of  $C_3H$  as determined via FTIR-spectroscopy [17]: the dissociation energy of the C-H-bond  $C_3H \rightarrow C_3(^1\Sigma_g^+) + H(^2S_{1/2})$  is calculated to be  $372 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$ , lower than typical aliphatic carbon-hydrogen bond strengths of  $400 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$ . Alternative reaction enthalpies are obtained by imposing different C-H-bond dissociation energies of model hydrocarbons, and yield reaction enthalpies to  $C_3H + H(^2S_{1/2})$  between  $-114$  (C-H-bond in ethane) and  $-253 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$  (C-H bond in acetylene). These exothermicities allow calculation of the maximum recoil velocities of the  $C_3H$ -fragment, shown as a limit circle in the kinematic diagram Fig. 1, assuming no rotational and vibrational excitation of the  $C_3H$  product.

Reactive scattering signal was observed only at  $m/z = 37$ , i.e.  $C_3H$  (Fig. 2); no  $C_3(^1\Sigma_g^+) + H_2(^1\Sigma_g^+)$ -channel was detected. Time-of-flight spectra for several scattering angles are shown in Fig. 2.



Reaction of carbon with acetylene-dimers to  $C_2H_3 + C_3H$  does not contribute to the signal within the detection limits of the experimental setup because the signal intensity scales linearly with the  $C_2H_2$  number density in the interaction region. The laboratory angular distribution (Fig.1) peaks at  $55^\circ$  near the center-of-mass angle at  $\theta_{COM} = (58.8 \pm 0.8)^\circ$ . The product distribution was fitted with a center-of-mass angular flux distribution  $T(\theta_C)$  forward scattered with respect to the carbon beam (Fig. 3) and a center-of-mass translational energy flux distribution  $P(E_T)$  peaking at only  $(5.4 \pm 1.2) \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$ , indicating nearly a simple barrierless C-H bond rupture process to  $C_3H$ .

The energy diagram in Fig. 3 outlines three different reaction pathways: insertion of  $C(^3P_j)$  in the C-H-bond of an acetylene molecule leads to triplet-propargylene (1) on the  $A'$  or  $A''$  surface ( $\Delta G_f^\circ = 551 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$ , [18]), whereas addition of the electrophile carbon atom to carbon centers on C1- and C2-atoms in  $C_2H_2$  forms triplet-cyclopropenylidene (3) ( $\Delta G_f^\circ = 706 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$  [19-25];  $A$  surface). Last, attack of two perpendicular C-2p-orbitals to both perpendicular  $\pi$ -MOs on C1 yields triplet-cis/trans propenediylidene (4)/(5) ( $\Delta G_f^\circ$  (trans) =  $779 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$ ,  $\Delta G_f^\circ$  (cis) =  $859 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$ , [19-25],  $A''$  surface). Finally, matrix studies via FTIR spectroscopy depict [2,1]-H-migration in propenediylidene proceeds with a barrier  $< 1 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$  to triplet-vinylidenecarbene (2) ( $\Delta G_f^\circ = 727 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$  [19-25]) while heating the matrix from 10 K to 36 K.

Insertion of  $C(^3P_j)$  into the C-H bond is expected to involve a significant entrance barrier. To our knowledge, no insertion of a triplet-species into a C-H-bond has been reported yet with a barrier less than our  $(8.4 \pm 0.3) \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$  collision energy; typical entrance barriers range between 20 and  $100 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$ . Additionally, reaction via triplet-propargylene (1) should yield a forward-backward-symmetric  $T(\theta_C)$  due to the deep well of the collision complex in respect to the reactants and  $H + C_3H$  products. Therefore, a reaction via triplet-propargylene (1) can likely be ruled out.

The forward-peaking  $T(\theta_c)$  in respect to the carbon beam suggests the reaction proceeds in a direct fashion via triplet-cyclopropenylidene (3), vinylidenecarbene (2), or triplet-cis/trans propenediylidene (4/5) with a life-time of less than one rotational period. The initially formed  $C_3H_2$ -collision complex has to rotate perpendicular to the C2-H-axis in the plane of the three carbon atoms (collision complex (4/5)), perpendicular to the C(in-plane)-H-bond (collision complex (3)), or perpendicular to the C1-H-bond (collision complex (2)) after [1,2] H-migration in order to explain the backward-peaking of the  $C_3H$ -product in respect to the acetylene-beam. Due to the low reduced mass of 0.974 amu in the exit channel to  $C_3H + H$ , momentum conservation demands  $C_3H$  to be strongly rotationally excited: hydrogen-bond rupture at C2 in cis/trans-propenediylidene (4/5) fulfills this condition and could populate high rotational levels of l- $C_3H$ -product. Likewise, bond-rupture at C2 in cis-propenediylidene (5) might excite rotational levels as can be treated as a linear combination of the doubly degenerate bending mode of l- $C_3H$ . Alternatively, rearrangement of (4/5) to triplet-vinylidenecarbene (2), followed by C-H-bond cleavage, fulfills the angular momentum criterion. Finally, an anisotropic exit potential in the triplet-cyclopropenylidene (3) PES could populate rotational levels of c- $C_3H$  after C-H bond cleavage.

At the present stage, we cannot identify the reaction pathway unambiguously. However, future experiments will increase the center-of-mass collision energy to  $\approx 50 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$ . Within orbiting limits, the additional collision energy should reduce the maximum impact parameter and result in a less polarized center-of-mass angular flux-distribution. Further, reactions of  $C(^3P_j)$  with deuterated acetylene  $C_2D_2$  and methyl-acetylene  $CH_3C_2H$  shift the reduced mass from 0.974 amu ( $C_3H + H$ ), to 1.897 amu ( $C_3D + D$ ) to 10.673 amu ( $CH_3 + C_3H$ ). Under these conditions, for the  $C_3H$  product, the increased reduced mass and, hence, final orbital momentum can reduce the rotational excitation. Finally, ab-initio calculations on the equilibrium geometry of (2)-(5) and the transition-state frequencies are in

preparation. Comparisons of the complex-lifetimes elucidated via the osculating complex model and RRKM-based reaction rate constants should identify the collision complex unambiguously.

Although atom-neutral reactions have been discussed for over a decade to influence interstellar column densities [4-6], they are only slowly being incorporated into interstellar reaction networks, predominantly owing to assumed order-of magnitude advantage of ion-molecule rate constants versus atom-neutral reactions ( $k(C^+ + C_2H_2) = (2.6 \pm 0.3) \cdot 10^{-9} \text{ cm}^3 \text{ s}^{-1}$  [26],  $k(C(^3P_j) + C_2H_2) = (2.0 \pm 0.1) \cdot 10^{-10} \text{ cm}^3 \text{ s}^{-1}$  [22], both at 293 K). The ratio of  $C(^3P_j)$  to singly ionized carbon ranges from 30 to 250 [27] in interstellar clouds, however, clearly undermining the order-of-magnitude rate constant advantage of ion-molecule reactions as compared to atom-molecule reactions. Hence, formation of interstellar  $C_3H$  via  $C(^3P_j) + C_2H_2$  yields a more realistic approach than postulated ion molecule reactions (1) - (2) and (4) - (5).

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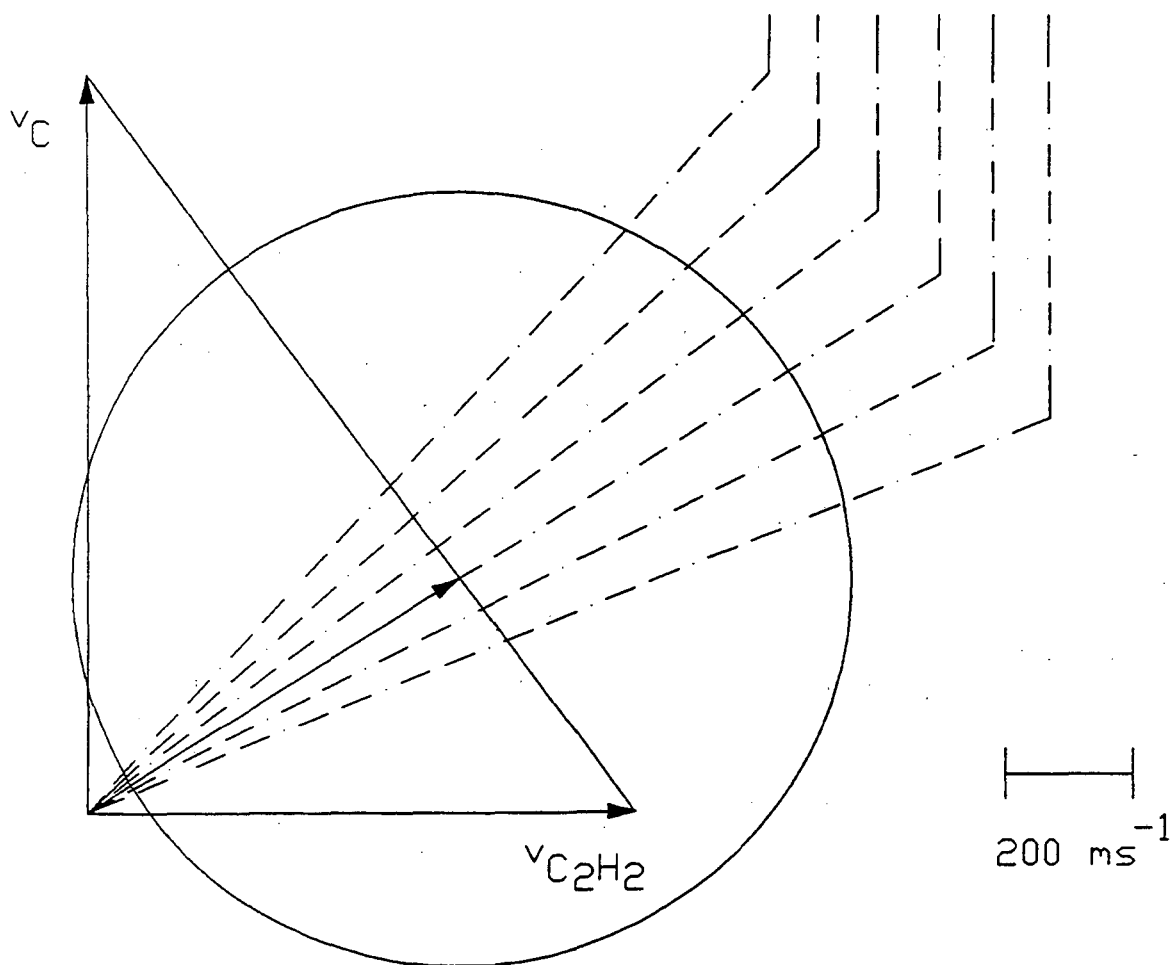
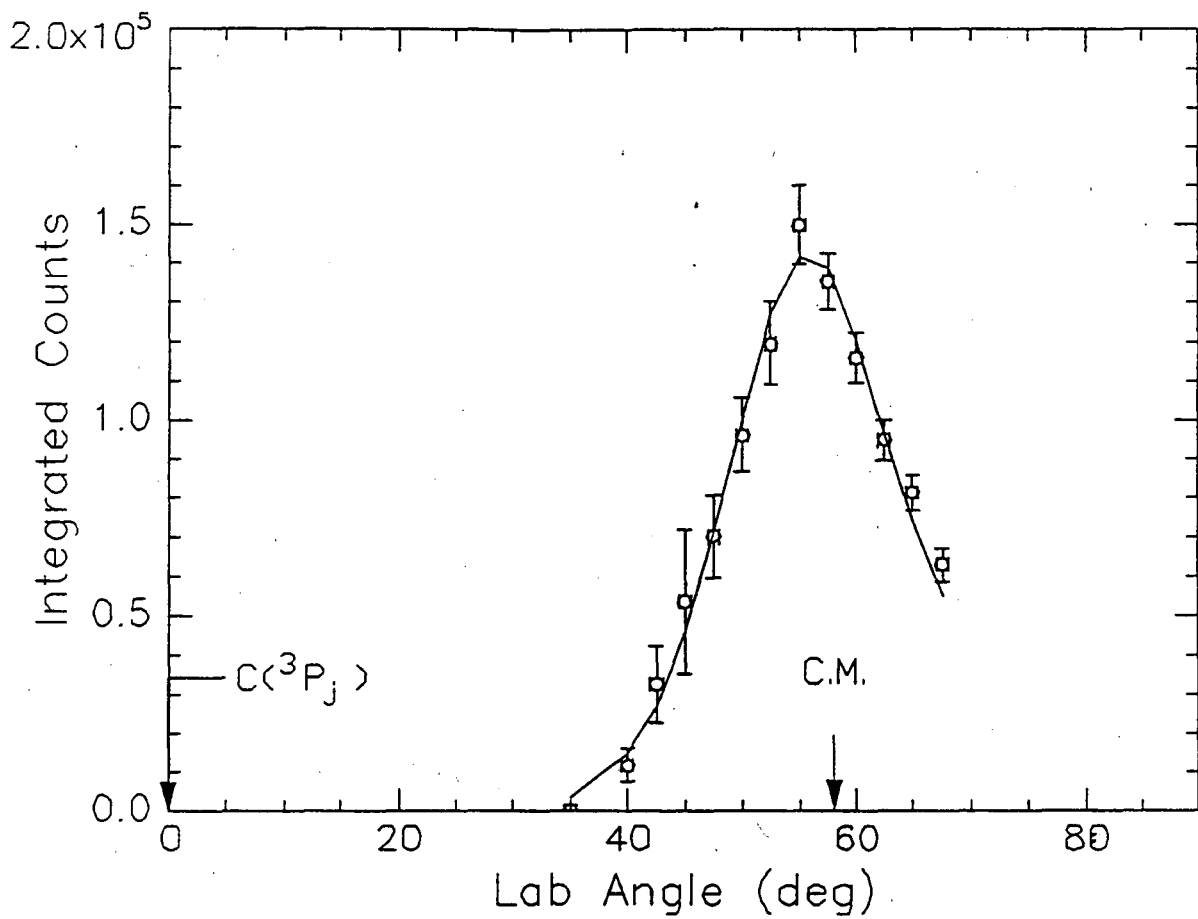
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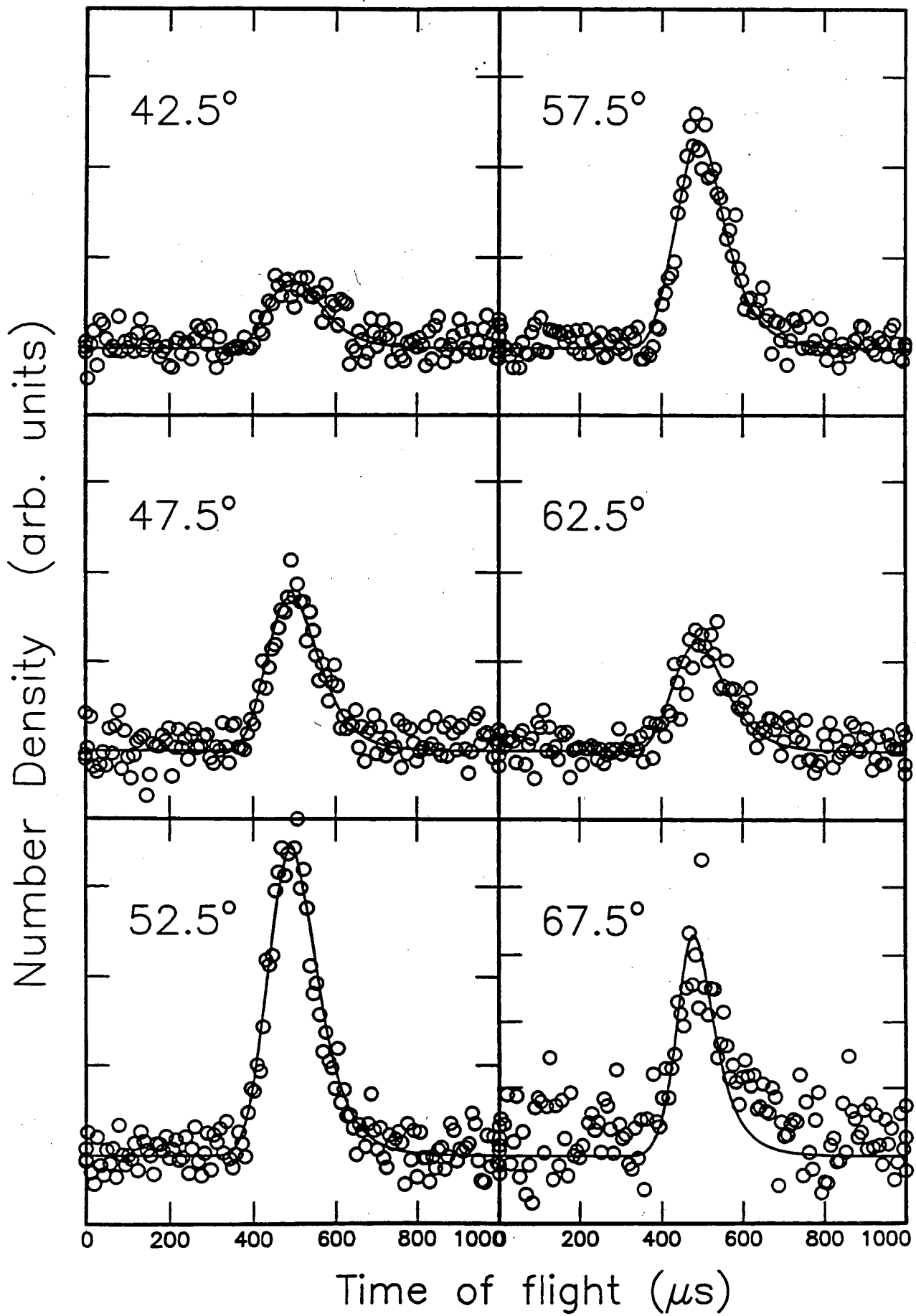
Fig. 1. Lower: Newton diagram for the reaction  $C(^3P_1) + C_2H_2(^1\Sigma_g^+)$  at a collision energy of  $8.8 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$ . The circle stands for the maximum center-of-mass recoil velocity of the  $C_3H$ -product (see text). Upper: Laboratory angular distribution of product channel at  $m/z = 37$ . Circles and error bars indicate experimental data, the solid line the calculated distribution.

Fig. 2. Time-of-flight data for laboratory angle  $42.5, 47.5, 52.5, 57.5, 62.5,$  and  $67.5^\circ$ .

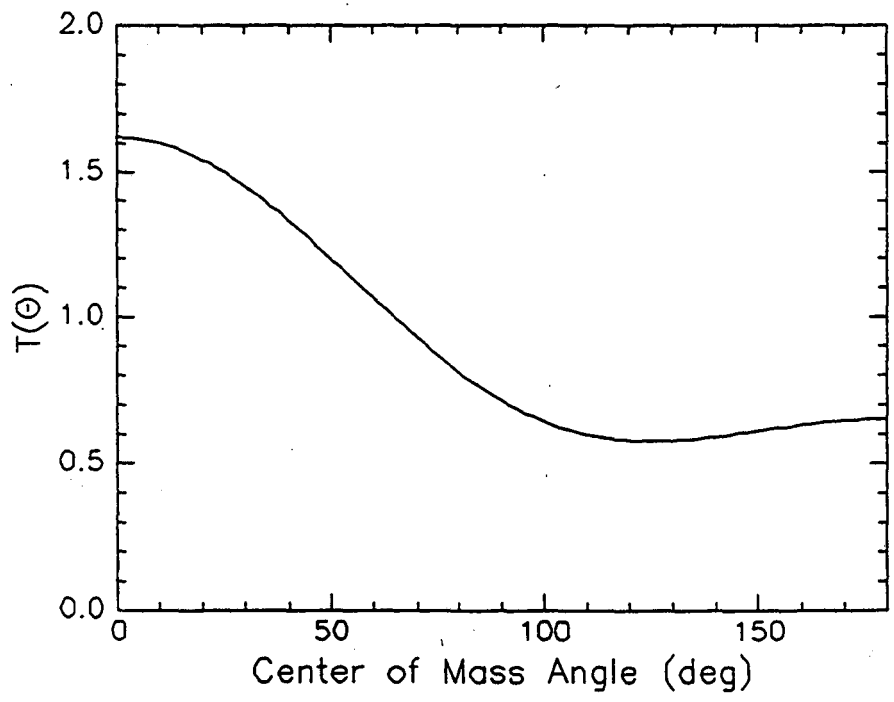
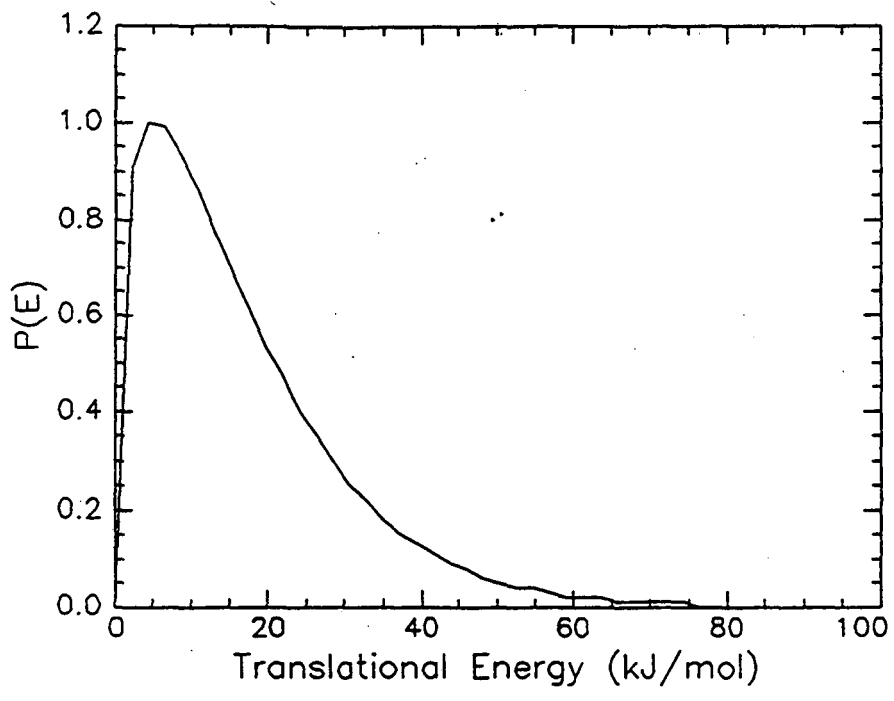
Fig. 3: Lower: Center-of-mass angular flux distribution for the reaction  $C(^3P_1) + C_2H_2(^1\Sigma_g^+)$  at a collision energy of  $8.8 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$ . Upper: Center-of-mass translational energy flux distribution for the reaction  $C(^3P_1) + C_2H_2(^1\Sigma_g^+)$  at a collision energy of  $8.8 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$ .

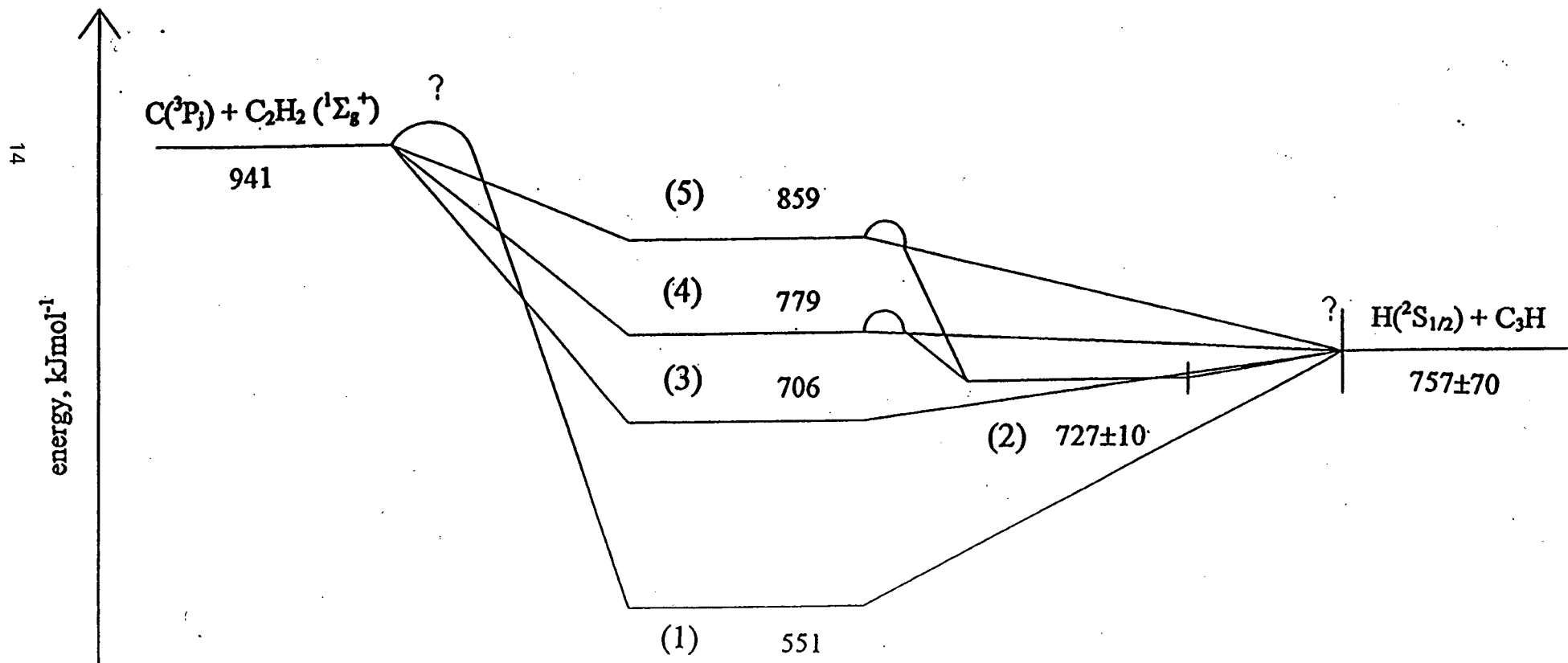
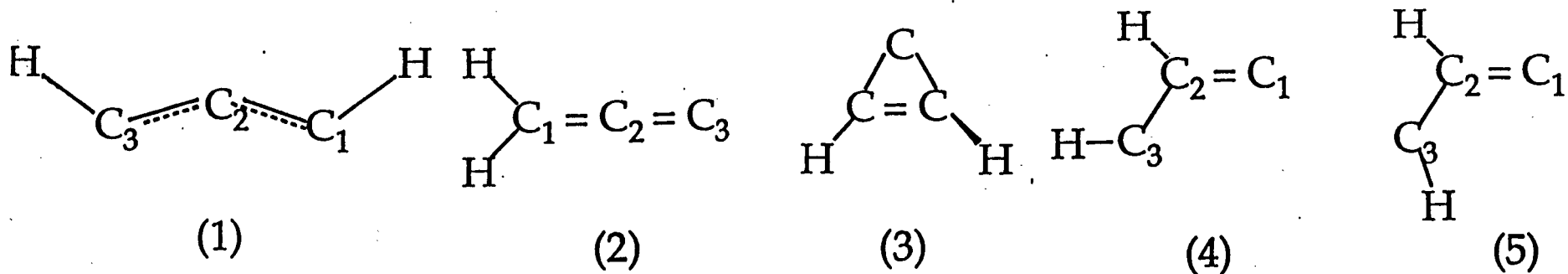
Fig. 4. Energy level diagram for the reaction  $C(^3P_1) + C_2H_2(^1\Sigma_g^+)$ : (1) triplet-propargylene, (2) triplet-vinylidenecarbene, (3) triplet-cyclopropenylidene, (4) triplet-trans propenediylidene, (5) triplet-cis propenediylidene.











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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
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