

# Synergistic Effect of TiO<sub>2</sub>–SiO<sub>2</sub> in Ag/Si–Ti Catalyst for the Selective Catalytic Oxidation of Ammonia

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ABSTRACT: In this study, Ag supported on TiO<sub>2</sub>, SiO<sub>2</sub>, and SiO<sub>2</sub>-TiO<sub>2</sub> catalysts were prepared through the impregnation method and their performance for the selective catalytic oxidation of ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>-SCO) was tested. The results showed that the Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>-TiO<sub>2</sub> (denoted as Ag/Si-Ti) performed at a much higher activity than Ag/TiO2 and Ag/ SiO<sub>2</sub> at low temperature range. Characterization results revealed that SiO<sub>2</sub> possessed a high surface area, but lacked OH groups and acidic sites; TiO<sub>2</sub> possessed abundant OH groups and acidic sites, but the surface area was low. High surface area and abundant OH groups were a benefit for the dispersion of Ag, and acidic sites contributed to the adsorption and activation of ammonia. The synergistic effect compromised the advantages



and disadvantages of SiO<sub>2</sub> and TiO<sub>2</sub>, which improved the dispersion of Ag, enriched acidic sites of the catalyst and maintained Ag<sup>0</sup> content at an appropriate level, therefore enhanced the NH<sub>3</sub>-SCO activity of Ag/Si-Ti catalyst.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ammonia  $(NH_3)$  is a common gas used in agriculture (nitrogen fertilizer), petroleum refining, and deNO<sub>x</sub> processes.<sup>1,2</sup> The NH<sub>3</sub> emission from these processes has potential harm to both human health and environment. Especially, it is conducive to the formation of haze in China, according to the latest reports.<sup>1,3-5</sup> Therefore, the controlling of NH<sub>3</sub> emissions is essential.

Various types of techniques have been reported in ammonia elimination, for example, adsorption, biofiltration, catalytic combustion, and catalytic oxidation, etc.<sup>6-8</sup> NH<sub>3</sub>-SCO method has distinct advantages for high efficiency and mild reaction condition, which is consequently considered to be a promising method to reduce NH<sub>3</sub> emissions. TiO<sub>2</sub>, SiO<sub>2</sub>, and Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> are the common support materials in NH<sub>3</sub>-SCO catalysts. Composite supports, such as SiO<sub>2</sub>-TiO<sub>2</sub> and TiO<sub>2</sub>- $Al_2O_3$ , were reported to possess the advantages of better redox abilities, higher surface areas, and enhanced acidic sites<sup>9</sup> compared to single-component oxide supports. However, the performance of composite oxide carriers were seldom researched in NH<sub>3</sub>-SCO field. In our previous study,<sup>10,11</sup> alumina supported Ag (Ag/Al2O3) catalysts were found to possess high NH<sub>3</sub>-SCO activity. Therefore, it is worthy of investigating if the SiO<sub>2</sub>-TiO<sub>2</sub> support will promote the NH<sub>3</sub>-SCO activity of Ag supported catalyst.

In this paper, single and composite carrier supported catalysts Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub>, Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/Si-Ti were prepared by impregnation method. The NH<sub>3</sub>-SCO activity (NH<sub>3</sub> conversion and N<sub>2</sub> selectivity) of the catalysts were evaluated and compared. Characterizations including BET, XRD, HRTEM, XPS, H<sub>2</sub>-TPR, XAFS, NH<sub>3</sub>-TPD, and in situ DRIFTS were performed to elucidate the structure-activity relationship of the catalysts. And on this basis, the mechanism of Ag anchoring was also preliminarily revealed.

#### 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

**2.1. Catalysts Preparation.** SiO<sub>2</sub> (Aerosil, Sigma-Aldrich) and  $TiO_2$  (Degussa P25) were purchased to prepare the Ag/ SiO<sub>2</sub>, Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub>, and Ag/Si-Ti catalysts. Before that the SiO<sub>2</sub>-TiO<sub>2</sub> (Si-Ti) composite support was prepared according to the following steps. First, SiO<sub>2</sub> and TiO<sub>2</sub> powders were blended in deionized water with weight ratio of TiO<sub>2</sub>:SiO<sub>2</sub> was 80:20 and stirred for 1 h. Vacuum rotatory evaporator was used for the drying of suspension and then the obtained sample was dehydrated at 105 °C for 12 h. The dried samples were calcinated at 500 °C for 2 h to obtain the SiO<sub>2</sub>-TiO<sub>2</sub>

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(Si–Ti) composite support. The Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>, Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/Si–Ti catalysts were prepared through impregnation method, 10 wt % Ag loading was chosen according to our previous studies.<sup>10,11</sup> Typically, same amount of SiO<sub>2</sub>, TiO<sub>2</sub> and Si–Ti powder along with deionized water to form suspension, amount of AgNO<sub>3</sub> aqueous solution was then introduced and stirred for 3 h. After that, the samples were dehydrated at 120 °C for 6 h and calcinated at 500 °C for 3 h. Finally, the samples were crushed and screened into 40–60 mesh powders.

**2.2. Sample Characterization.** Quantachrome Quantasorb SI-MP analyzer (Quanta Chrome Instrument Co.) was used to obtain the surface area and pore size distribution of catalysts. The catalysts were outgassed in N<sub>2</sub> flow at 300 °C for 4 h before nitrogen adsorption at -196 °C. The crystalline structure of the samples were detected by XRD (Bruker D8 ADVANCE Diffractometer) with Cu K<sub>a</sub> radiation source ( $\lambda = 0.15406$  nm) at 40 kV and 40 mA. The spectra were collected with  $2\theta$  ranging from 10 to 90° with a scan speed of 6° min<sup>-1</sup>. JEOL JEM 2010 TEM was used to collect HR-TEM images and the acceleration voltage was 200 kV.

XPS was measured on an X-ray photoelectron spectrometer (PHI Quantera, ULVAC-PHI, Inc.) with Al K $\alpha$  radiation. The binding energies of all the elements were calibrated internally by C 1s (BE = 284.8 eV). XAFS measurements of the Ag-K edge was carried out on the BL14W1 XAFS beamline at the Shanghai Synchrotron Radiation Facility (SSRF) and the PE storage ring was operated at 3.5 GeV with 200 mA. Athena program (contained in IFFEFIT software package) was used to process and analysis the XAFS data.<sup>12</sup> The filtered  $k^2$  weighted  $\chi(k)$  was Fourier transforms into R space (k range: 2.2–12.8) Å<sup>-1</sup>). H<sub>2</sub>-TPR was measured through Micromeritics AutoChem II 2920 instrument, with a TCD detector continuously monitoring the consumption of  $H_2$ . The catalysts (100 mg) were pretreated with 20% O<sub>2</sub>/Ar (50 mL·min<sup>-1</sup>) at 300 °C for 30 min, and then purged in Ar flow for 30 min. After that, 10%  $H_2/Ar$  (50 mL·min<sup>-1</sup>) was introduced into the sample with temperature range from 20 to 700 °C (ramp rate of 10 °C·  $\min^{-1}$ ).

NH<sub>3</sub>-TPD spectra was collected on a quadrupole mass spectrometer (MKS Cirrus) by monitoring the signals of NH<sub>3</sub> (m/z = 17). The catalysts (100 mg) were pretreated at 400 °C for 30 min with 20% O<sub>2</sub>/N<sub>2</sub> (50 mL·min<sup>-1</sup>) and exposed to NH<sub>3</sub> for 1 h at 50 °C, and then purged by Ar for 30 min. Finally, the temperature was increased to 400 °C under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere with the rate of 10 °C·min<sup>-1</sup>. In situ DRIFTS was recorded on a NEXUS 670-FTIR spectrometer with an MCT/ A detector. The samples were pretreated at 500 °C for 30 min with 20 vol % O<sub>2</sub>/N<sub>2</sub>, and then purged with N<sub>2</sub> to collect the background spectrum. All spectra were collected with a resolution of 4 cm<sup>-1</sup> and the accumulation of 100 scans.

**2.3. Catalytic Activity Test.** The NH<sub>3</sub>–SCO activity of the catalysts were tested under atmospheric pressure with a fixed-bed reactor (diameter of 4 mm). The total gas flow was 100 mL·min<sup>-1</sup> with GHSV of 28 000 h<sup>-1</sup>, containing NH<sub>3</sub> (500 ppm), O<sub>2</sub> (10 vol %) and balance N<sub>2</sub>. The concentration of NH<sub>3</sub> and reaction products (NO, NO<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>O) were analyzed by an online FTIR spectrometer equipped with a DTGS detector. NH<sub>3</sub> conversion (X<sub>NH3</sub>) and N<sub>2</sub> selectivity (S<sub>N2</sub>) were calculated as follows:·

$$X_{NH3} = 1 - \frac{[NH_3]out}{[NH_3]in} \times 100\%$$
 (1)

$$S_{N2} = \frac{[NH_3]in - 2[N_2O]out - [NO_2]out - [NO]out}{[NH_3]in} \times 100\%$$
(2)

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# 3. RESULTS

**3.1. Results of Activity Tests.** The performances of Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>, Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/Si-Ti catalysts for the NH<sub>3</sub>-SCO were shown in Figure 1. The result showed that Ag/Si-Ti



Figure 1. (A)  $NH_3$  conversion (B)  $N_2$  selectivity at different temperatures over Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>, Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub>, and Ag/Si-Ti samples.

catalyst performed at a much higher catalytic activity than Ag/ SiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub>. As shown in Figure 1 (A), NH<sub>3</sub> conversion over Ag/Si–Ti started from 100 °C and reached up to 90% at *T* (temperature) > 130 °C. In contrast, Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> were inactive even at 140 °C and obtained a 90% conversion of NH<sub>3</sub> at 150–170 °C. Thus, it was clear that there existed an obvious synergistic effect between SiO<sub>2</sub> and TiO<sub>2</sub> in Ag/Si–Ti catalyst for NH<sub>3</sub>–SCO. The N<sub>2</sub> selectivity (Figure 1 (B))over Ag/Si–Ti was about 60% and the main byproduct was N<sub>2</sub>O.

**3.2.** Results of Characterization. 3.2.1. Structural Properties. Table 1 shows the BET surface area  $(S_{BET})$  of Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>, Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/Si-Ti prepared in this study. As can be seen, the  $S_{BET}$  of Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> catalyst was as low as 30.1 m<sup>2</sup>/g, while the  $S_{BET}$  of Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> was very high (150.3 m<sup>2</sup>/g). The doping SiO<sub>2</sub> into TiO<sub>2</sub> resulted in the higher BET surface

 Table 1. BET Surface Area, Pore Volume, and Pore

 Diameter of the Samples

sample	$BET(m^2/g)$	pore volume $(mL/g)$	pore diameter (nm)
$Ag/TiO_2$	30.1	0.2	3.4
$Ag/SiO_2$	150.3	1.1	32.4
Ag/Si-Ti	66.5	0.4	21.6

area (66.5 m<sup>2</sup>/g) of Ag/Si–Ti catalyst than Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub>. The pore volume and pore diameter of Ag/Si–Ti also showed higher values than Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub>. Apparently  $TiO_2$  and  $SiO_2$  interacted well.

The XRD patterns for the samples were presented in Figure 2. Diffraction peaks of Ag (111), (200), (220), and (311)



Figure 2. XRD profiles of Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>, Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub>, and Ag/Si-Ti catalysts.

lattice planes were observed in all samples.<sup>13</sup> It is obvious that Ag was well-crystallized on Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>, whereas the peaks in Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/Si–Ti were broad and low in intensity. These findings indicated that Ag species were highly dispersed on TiO<sub>2</sub> support possibly due to the strong interaction between metal and support,<sup>14–16</sup> while the interaction between Ag and SiO<sub>2</sub> was so weak that Ag tend to aggregation on SiO<sub>2</sub> during calcination.<sup>15</sup>

The particle-size distribution and the HRTEM images of  $Ag/SiO_2$ ,  $Ag/TiO_2$ , and Ag/Si-Ti catalysts were presented in Figure 3. As can be seen, the Ag particles were uniformly distributed with small size on the  $TiO_2$  and the composite support Si-Ti, while on SiO<sub>2</sub> support, Ag distributed unevenly and formed spherical aggregates with different particle size. The particle size of Ag on  $Ag/SiO_2$ ,  $Ag/TiO_2$  and Ag/Si-Ti were counted and shown in Figure 3, and the average particle size was 6.4, 4.3, and 4.0 nm, respectively.

3.2.2. Chemical States. In order to acquire the detailed information about the chemical environment and valence state of Ag species over the catalysts, XPS spectra at the Ag 3d core levels were measured and the spectra were presented in Figure 4. The Ag  $3d_{5/2}$  core level binding energies of Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>, Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub>, and Ag/Si–Ti samples appeared at 368.4, 367.9, and 368.1 eV, respectively. As reported in the literature, the Ag  $3d_{5/2}$  at 367.5 eV corresponds to Ag oxide and that 368.3 eV corresponds to metallic Ag.<sup>17</sup> Thus Ag 3d binding energy of Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> was in accordance with metallic Ag species, which was also in line with XRD diffraction patterns in which metallic Ag peaks were clearly observed. While the Ag  $3d_{5/2}$  value of

Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> was close to Ag oxide, which suggested that Ag<sup>+</sup> was the majority in Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> sample. The Ag  $3d_{5/2}$  peak of Ag/Si–Ti (368.1 eV) located at between the corresponding energy of Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub>. In addition, it can also be observed that the intensity of Ag 3d in Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> was much weaker than that of Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/Si–Ti due to the aggregation of Ag on Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>.

Figure 5 displayed XAFS data of catalysts (Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>, Ag/ TiO<sub>2</sub>, and Ag/Si-Ti) and standard samples (Ag-foil and AgNO<sub>3</sub>). As shown in Figure 5(A), normalized near-edge structure (XANES) of Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> was similar to Ag-foil, whereas the patterns of Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/Si-Ti were different from the patterns of both Ag-foil and AgNO<sub>3</sub>. Hence, the Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> catalyst possessed similar electronic properties and Ag species on  $SiO_2$  was in metallic state,<sup>18</sup> while Ag in Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/ Si-Ti existed in the mixture state of Ag<sup>0</sup> and Ag<sup>+</sup>. In addition, as presented in Figure 5(B) the normalized first-order derivative peaks of Ag/TiO2 and Ag/Si-Ti appeared at 25516.8 and 25516.3 eV, respectively. While, the corresponding peaks for the Ag-K edge in Ag foil and AgNO3 were located at 25 514.7 and 25 518.7 eV, respectively. Thus, it can be concluded that more Ag<sup>0</sup> existed in Ag/Si-Ti than in Ag/ TiO2.<sup>19</sup> This speculation was also be confirmed by the XANES fitting result in Table. 2 that the content of  $Ag^0$  in  $Ag/SiO_2$ , Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/Si-Ti were 62%, 25% and 33% respectively. This result was in line with XPS.

Fourier transforms of  $k^2$ -weighted EXAFS spectra of the catalysts were presented in Figure 5 (C). Consistent with XANES results, intense peaks at 2.67 and 1.64 Å exhibited on all samples, which were attributed to the contiguous Ag–Ag metallic bond<sup>18,20</sup> and Ag–O interactions,<sup>20</sup> respectively. The intensity of the Ag–Ag and Ag–O bonds varied on different samples, and the fitting parameters were given in Table 2. The Ag–Ag coordination number of Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> sample was much higher than the other two samples, which also revealed more Ag<sup>0</sup> existed in Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> sample.

In order to investigate the redox ability of Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>, Ag/ TiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/Si-Ti catalysts, H<sub>2</sub>-TPR experiments were conducted and the results are presented in Figure 6. Only one obvious peak was observed in  $Ag/SiO_2$  and the  $H_2$ consumption amounts of Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> was much smaller than Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/Si-Ti samples, which confirms the XPS (Figure 4) and XANES results (Figure 5 A) that Ag was mainly in the form of  $Ag^0$  in  $Ag/SiO_2$  sample. In contrast, there were four main peaks in Ag/TiO2 with more H2 consumption, which were located at 66, 139, 343, and 476 °C, respectively. As mentioned,<sup>21</sup> the peak under 100 °C was attributed to the reduction of chemisorbed oxygen on catalysts surface, and the peak near 100 °C was due to the reduction of large Ag<sub>2</sub>O clusters; the peaks at around 350 and 450 °C were attributed to the reduction of stable and well dispersed Ag<sub>2</sub>O or Ag<sup>+</sup> ions.  $^{21,22}$  As to Ag/Si–Ti sample, the addition of Si shifted the reduction peak to lower temperatures from 66 °C for Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> to 58 °C for Ag/Si-Ti. In addition, only three peaks were observed with less H<sub>2</sub> consumption in Ag/Si-Ti indicating that the Ag<sup>0</sup> content and the sample redox ability were improved with the addition of Si.

3.2.3. Surface Acidity. As shown in Figure 7, NH<sub>3</sub>-TPD peaks of the samples were deconvoluted into three sub-bands (93 °C, 136 °C, 221 °C), and three bands were attributed to physically adsorbed NH<sub>3</sub>, NH<sub>3</sub> bound to weak and strong acid sites,<sup>23</sup> respectively. It is showed that physisorbed NH<sub>3</sub> had a higher proportion on Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>, while the percentage of strong



Figure 3. HRTEM of (A) Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>, (B) Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub>, and (C) Ag/Si-Ti catalysts.



Figure 4. Ag 3d XPS spectra of Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>, Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/Si-Ti.

acidic sites were higher in Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub>. Moreover, the addition of SiO<sub>2</sub> to TiO<sub>2</sub> increased the amount of both weak and strong acidic sites. Ag/Si–Ti sample contained much higher surface density of acidic sites, which was beneficial for the adsorption and activation of  $\rm NH_3.^{24-26}$ 

We further checked the difference of acidic sites over  $SiO_2$ ,  $TiO_2$  and Si-Ti supports through in situ DRIFTS of  $NH_3$  adsorption. It can be observed in Figure 8 A that the adsorption strength of  $NH_3$  was very weak and it was almost disappeared after  $N_2$  purging on  $SiO_2$  support, thus  $NH_3$  was

mainly in the form of physical absorption on SiO<sub>2</sub> support. As for TiO<sub>2</sub> and Si–Ti supports in Figure 8B, C, the change of NH<sub>3</sub> adsorption strength was not obvious after N<sub>2</sub> purging. The stable states of NH<sub>3</sub> adsorption on SiO<sub>2</sub>, TiO<sub>2</sub> and Si–Ti supports after N<sub>2</sub> purging were compared and presented in Figure 8D. The bands at 3100–3400 cm<sup>-1</sup> were assigned to the stretching vibration of the N–H bonds in NH<sub>3</sub>,<sup>23,27</sup> bands corresponding to Brønsted acidic sites (1436 cm<sup>-1</sup>) and Lewis acidic sites (1595, 1542, 1242, and 1163 cm<sup>-1</sup>)<sup>23,27</sup> were also detected on TiO<sub>2</sub> and Si–Ti supports. The negative bands at 3400–4000 cm<sup>-1</sup> were assigned to the consumption of surface hydroxyl groups. It can be seen that SiO<sub>2</sub> had neither acidic sites nor OH groups. Thus, we can conclude both of Brønsted and Lewis acidic sites are significant for NH<sub>3</sub>–SCO.

3.2.4. Silver Anchoring. It was reported that metals can be anchored on support through reaction between metal ions and surface hydroxyl groups on the support.<sup>28–30</sup> In order to confirm the dependency of OH and Ag anchoring, the NH<sub>3</sub> adsorption in situ DRIFTS analysis was conducted over Ag/ Si–Ti catalysts with different Ag loadings. As shown in Figure 9 A, the intensity of the OH groups decreased rapidly when Ag was added. The hydroxyl peak areas were then calculated by integrating and the correlation between Ag content and hydroxyl peak area was then fitted in Figure 9B. It was clear that OH content correlated strongly with Ag loadings that the correlation coefficients ( $r^2$ ) above 0.92. These results proved that Ag was anchored on supports surface through the consumption of OH groups.



**Figure 5.** Ag–K edge XAFS spectra, (A) Normalized near-edge structure (XANES), (B) first-order derivatives, (C)  $k^2$  weighted EXAFS spectra (Fourier transform k range 2.2–12.8 Å<sup>-1</sup>) of catalysts and standard samples

# 4. DISCUSSION

Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub>, Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>, and Ag/Si–Ti catalysts were prepared and the NH<sub>3</sub>–SCO activity were tested in this study. The results showed that Ag/Si–Ti possessed a higher low-temperature NH<sub>3</sub>–SCO activity ( $T_{90} = 130$  °C) than Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> ( $T_{90} = 150$ 

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Table 2. Fitting Results of Ag-K XANES and EXAFS

	Ag—K XANES		Ag-K EXAFS				
sample	Ag <sup>0</sup> (%)	Ag <sup>+</sup> (%)	shell	CN <sup>a</sup>	R <sup>b</sup> (Å)	$(10^{-3} \text{ Å}^{2c})$	R factor (%)
Ag/ SiO <sub>2</sub>	62	38	Ag-O	$0.8 \pm 0.3$	2.17	11.4	0.17
			Ag–Ag <sub>1</sub>	$6.8\pm0.9$	2.86	9.6	
			Ag-Ag <sub>2</sub>	$9.7 \pm 1.7$	2.92	56.6	
Ag/ TiO <sub>2</sub>	25	75	Ag-O	$2.1 \pm 0.3$	2.25	16.7	0.37
			Ag–Ag <sub>1</sub>	$3.5 \pm 1.5$	2.86	10.9	
			Ag-Ag <sub>2</sub>	$2.7\pm0.4$	3.12	32.8	
Ag/ Si- Ti	33	67	Ag–O	$1.7 \pm 0.3$	2.22	15.2	0.33
			Ag-Ag <sub>1</sub>	$4.4 \pm 1.2$	2.86	10.3	
			Ag-Ag <sub>2</sub>	$2.9 \pm 0.9$	3.12	35.6	

 $^{a}\mathrm{CN:}$  coordination number.  $^{b}\mathrm{R:}$  bond distance.  $^{c}\sigma\text{:}$  Debye–Waller factor.



Figure 6. H<sub>2</sub>-TPR profiles of Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub>, Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub>, and Ag/Si–Ti catalysts.



Figure 7. TPD profiles of  $NH_3$  from  $Ag/TiO_2$ ,  $Ag/SiO_2$ , and Ag/Si-Ti catalysts.



Figure 8. In situ DRIFTS results of  $N_2$  purge after  $NH_3$  adsorption over (A)  $SiO_2$ , (B)  $TiO_2$ , (C) Si-Ti supports, and (D) comparison of the stable states after  $N_2$  purge at room temperature.



**Figure 9.** in situ DRIFTS with  $NH_3$  as the probe molecule of hydroxyl content over Ag/Si–Ti catalysts with different Ag loadings (A), linear fitting result of Ag content and hydroxyl peak area (B).

°C) and Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> ( $T_{90} = 170$  °C), indicating the existence of synergistic effect between SiO<sub>2</sub> and TiO<sub>2</sub> in Ag/Si–Ti catalyst.

It was reported before<sup>28,29</sup> and confirmed in this article that metals were anchored on the support through reaction between metal ions and surface hydroxyl groups on the carrier. Characterization results presented that the BET surface area and average pore diameter of SiO<sub>2</sub> support were huge. Since there is no insufficient OH groups on SiO<sub>2</sub> for Ag anchor, Ag species aggregated into large Ag<sup>0</sup> particles. Metallic Ag was reported to possess higher redox performance,<sup>10</sup> which was also confirmed by the H2-TPR results that the reduction temperature of Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> was the lowest. The BET surface area of TiO<sub>2</sub> support was small but there were abundant OH groups, which provided the anchor sites for Ag species, therefore the Ag dispersion on TiO<sub>2</sub> was high. The strong anchoring strength made Ag species tend to oxidation state. Thus, the redox ability of Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> was relatively poor as performed through the H<sub>2</sub>-TPR results. In addition, the surface acidity of Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> catalyst was high because of the abundant acidic sites of TiO<sub>2</sub> support. As to the composite support  $SiO_2-TiO_2$ , the doping of  $SiO_2$  compromised the surface area of SiO<sub>2</sub> and TiO<sub>2</sub> supports, and the synergistic effect enhanced the content of OH groups and acidic sites. The abundant OH groups were benefit for the dispersion of Ag on Si-Ti support and high concentration of acidic sites can conduce to the adsorption and activation of NH<sub>3</sub>. According to the literatures, both of Brønsted and Lewis acidic sites are important but they may play the different roles in NH3-SCO reaction.<sup>24-26</sup> Our recent research also find that Lewis acidic sites can contribute to the dissociation of NH<sub>3</sub>, whereas NH<sub>4</sub><sup>+</sup> adsorbed on Brønsted sites are more reactive with O2. In addition, characterization results also revealed that Ag species in Ag/ Si-Ti existed in the mixture state of Ag<sup>0</sup> and Ag<sup>+</sup> and more  $Ag^0$  existed in Ag/Si-Ti than in Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub>. We come to the



Figure 10. Schematic drawings of the possible process of  $NH_3$  adsorption and activation over the surface of  $Ag/SiO_2$ ,  $Ag/TiO_2$ , and Ag/Si-Ti catalysts.

conclusion that the doping of SiO<sub>2</sub> weakened the anchoring strength of Ag and made it more easily to decompose during calcination into metallic Ag. Since the Ag<sup>0</sup> species are much more active for O<sub>2</sub> activation, high Ag content is also beneficial to the overoxidation of NH<sub>3</sub>. In addition, our recent work<sup>11</sup> shows that Ag<sup>0</sup> can contribute to the dissociation of NH<sub>3</sub> to N<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup>, and thus N<sub>2</sub>O could be easily generated in the reaction between O<sub>2</sub> and N<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup>. Therefore, although the high Ag<sup>0</sup> content in Ag/Si–Ti catalyst enhanced the NH<sub>3</sub> conversion, it also led to the low N<sub>2</sub> selectivity.

Thus, we can conclude that Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> catalyst possessed high content of Ag<sup>0</sup> as well as high redox ability. However, the lack of OH groups led to the aggregation of Ag into large particles, meanwhile the insufficient of acidic site limited the adsorption and activation of NH<sub>3</sub>. Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> catalyst possessed abundant OH groups to anchor Ag and the acidic sites was also plentiful. While the strong anchoring strength prompt Ag species to show oxidation state and thus the redox ability of Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> was relatively poor. What's more, the small surface area of Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> also limited the NH<sub>3</sub>-SCO activity. The defects of Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> and Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> were improved through the composition of SiO<sub>2</sub> and TiO<sub>2</sub> supports. Synergistic effect enhanced the dispersion of Ag and content of acidic sites as well as maintained Ag<sup>0</sup> content at a certain level. Therefore, high dispersion of Ag, appropriate content of Ag<sup>0</sup> and abundant acidic sites were crucial factors for NH<sub>3</sub>-SCO activity. The features of the three catalysts and the corresponding impact mechanisms for the process of NH<sub>3</sub> adsorption and activation during NH<sub>3</sub>-SCO were drawn in Figure 10.

#### 5. CONCLUSIONS

The NH<sub>3</sub>-SCO activity of Ag/Si-Ti was higher ( $T_{90} = 130$  °C) than Ag/TiO<sub>2</sub> ( $T_{90} = 150$  °C) and Ag/SiO<sub>2</sub> ( $T_{90} = 170$  °C) at low temperatures. Characterization results indicated that Ag dispersion, Ag species state and surface acidity were crucial factors for NH<sub>3</sub>-SCO activity. It was revealed that OH content correlated strongly with Ag loadings and Ag was anchored through the consumption of OH groups. The composition of SiO<sub>2</sub> and TiO<sub>2</sub> enhanced the content of OH groups, which provided the anchoring sites for Ag and thus improved the dispersion of Ag. The synergistic effect also improved the content of acidic sites and maintained Ag<sup>0</sup> content at an appropriate level. Finally, well-dispersed Ag with appropriate Ag<sup>0</sup> content along with abundant acidic sites improved the NH<sub>3</sub>-SCO activity of Ag/Si-Ti catalyst.

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#### Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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