

## Alzheimer's Disease Related Copper(II)- $\beta$ -Amyloid Peptide Exhibits Phenol Monooxygenase and Catechol Oxidase Activities\*\*

Giordano F. Z. da Silva and Li-June Ming\*

Over the past few years an enormous effort has been directed toward the investigation of the metal-dependent mechanisms that lead to the neuropathology of Alzheimer's disease (AD).<sup>[1]</sup> The self-assembled metallo- $\beta$ -amyloid (A $\beta$ ) peptide fibrils are the hallmark of this disease<sup>[2]</sup> and have been attributed to Fe<sup>III</sup>- and Cu<sup>II</sup>-centered generation of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> under reducing conditions. The latter, H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>, has been postulated to be of significant importance in connection with neuropathy in AD.<sup>[3,4]</sup> However, an area of oversight has been the detailed chemical processes associated with the neuropathology of AD, besides the generally acclaimed assault by ROS (reactive oxygen species; e.g. H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>).<sup>[5]</sup> Hence, a better understanding of metal-centered redox chemistry and the mechanism for the generation of ROS and their fate can provide insight into potential strategies for the prevention and treatment of AD.

Several examples of redox chemistry in biological systems are known to be associated with di- or multinuclear "Type-3" Cu oxidases,<sup>[6]</sup> which may be related to the redox activity of Cu<sup>II</sup>A $\beta$ .<sup>[1-4]</sup> A number of chemical model systems that target Type-3 copper centers have successfully been demonstrated to contain highly active isoelectronic copper-dioxygen species (i.e. Cu<sub>2</sub><sup>II</sup>- $\mu$ - $\eta^1$ : $\eta^1$ -peroxo, Cu<sub>2</sub><sup>II</sup>- $\mu$ - $\eta^2$ : $\eta^2$ -peroxo, and Cu<sub>2</sub><sup>III</sup>-bis- $\mu$ -oxo), which are responsible for copper-dependent oxidation and hydroxylation reactions.<sup>[6-9]</sup> Despite extensive modeling studies, peptide mimics of these enzymes have apparently been excluded from the studies. Cu<sup>II</sup>A $\beta$  seems to fill the gap as it is a naturally occurring Cu-peptide complex demonstrated to exhibit oxygen-associated redox chemistry,<sup>[1-4]</sup> although details about its oxygen binding and activation mechanisms are lacking. Herein, we present results which

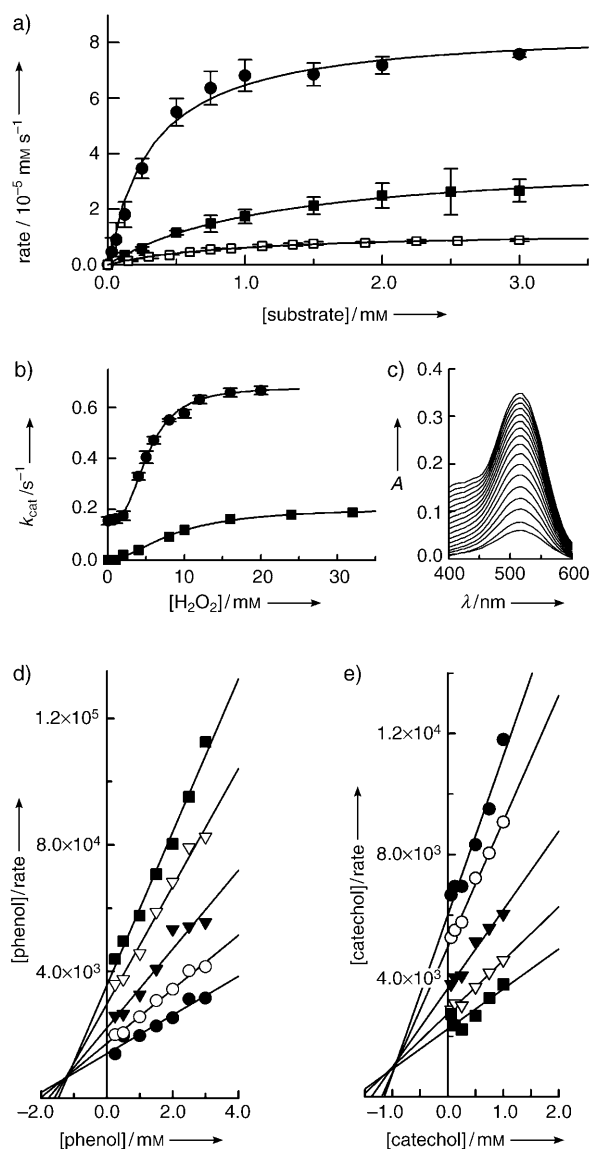
bring together two distinct fields of research: Alzheimer's disease and Type-3 copper centers. The results elucidate that the Cu<sup>II</sup> complex (CuA $\beta$ <sub>1-20</sub>) of the icosapeptidyl metal-binding domain of A $\beta$  (DAEFR<sup>5</sup>HDSGY<sup>10</sup>EVH<sup>15</sup>N<sup>15</sup>-KLVFF<sup>20</sup>) exhibits metal-centered redox chemistry that is consistent with the mechanisms of the Type-3 copper enzymes, namely, phenol monooxygenase (e.g. tyrosinase) and catechol oxidase.

The metal-centered redox chemistry of CuA $\beta$ <sub>1-20</sub> was probed using catechol and the more-inert phenol as substrates.<sup>[10,11]</sup> The oxidation of catechol under aerobic conditions reached a plateau at low mM concentrations, and the saturation profile fits well to pre-equilibrium kinetics [Eqs. (1) and (2)]<sup>[12]</sup> to afford the rate constant  $k_{\text{cat}} = 0.154 \text{ s}^{-1}$ , the dissociation constant  $K'_{\text{app}} = 0.35 \text{ mM}$  (Figure 1a), and a significant second-order rate constant  $k_{\text{cat}}/K'_{\text{app}} = 440 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$  (cat = catalytic, app = apparent). As the formation of quinone from catechol is a two-electron oxidative process, the reaction is expected to follow the two-electron dinuclear reaction pathway for catechol oxidase,<sup>[13]</sup> wherein the binding of catechol to the active-site dicopper(II) center results in the reduction of the center to yield dicopper(I) with concomitant production of *o*-quinone. The reduced dicopper(I) center can bind dioxygen to afford the active peroxo-bridged dicopper(II) center, which can further oxidize a subsequently bound substrate. H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> can also be generated in this reaction pathway from the peroxo-bridged dicopper(II) center in the presence of a reducing agent such as the substrate itself. This pathway for the production of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> under reducing conditions is consistent with previous observations in AD studies.<sup>[3]</sup> The catechol oxidase like mechanism has also been observed in kinetic studies of several chemical model systems<sup>[14]</sup> and in the oxidation of polyphenols by CuA $\beta$ <sub>1-20</sub>.<sup>[15]</sup> Note that a recent study based on density functional theory (DFT) pointed to mixed-valence Cu<sup>II</sup>-Cu<sup>I</sup> transition states,<sup>[16]</sup> which support the suggested reduction pathway for the Cu center.

We previously determined the Cu<sup>II</sup>/A $\beta$ <sub>1-20</sub> stoichiometry as 1:1 for oxidative activity with three *N*<sub>ε</sub>-coordinated imidazole histidine rings as metal-binding ligands.<sup>[15]</sup> As activity is an excellent probe for determining stoichiometry, gradual replacement of Cu<sup>II</sup> centers in CuA $\beta$ <sub>1-20</sub> with redox-inactive Zn<sup>II</sup> centers can serve as a practical method for addressing the nature of the active metal center by virtually "silencing" the active sites through dilution with Zn<sup>II</sup>. A quadratic correlation between the activity and the extent of Zn<sup>II</sup> dilution should be observed for simple 1:1 metal binding if there is no cooperativity and/or interactions between the Cu<sup>II</sup> centers at the active site with different A $\beta$  strands. Conversely, a sigmoidal activity profile was observed as a function of the mole fraction of Cu<sup>II</sup> in A $\beta$ <sub>1-20</sub> toward the oxidation of the catechol derivative 3,5-di-*tert*-butyl catechol (DTC,  $k_{\text{cat}} = 0.411 \text{ s}^{-1}$  and  $K'_{\text{app}} = 0.781 \text{ mM}$ ) which can be fitted well to the Hill equation [Eq. (3)]<sup>[17]</sup> with a Hill coefficient of  $\theta = 2.40$  and  $r^2 = 0.99$  (Figure 2a, solid line). The data clearly cannot be fitted well to a quadratic equation for 1:1 noncooperative binding mode ( $r^2 = 0.91$ ; dashed line, Figure 2a). These results imply the possible presence of a cooperative dinuclear active Cu<sup>II</sup> center during the catalytic

[\*] G. F. Z. da Silva, Prof. L.-J. Ming  
Department of Chemistry and  
Institute for Biomolecular Science  
University of South Florida  
4202 E. Fowler Avenue, SCA400, Tampa, FL 33620-5250 (USA)  
Fax: (+1) 813-974-3203  
E-mail: ming@shell.cas.usf.edu

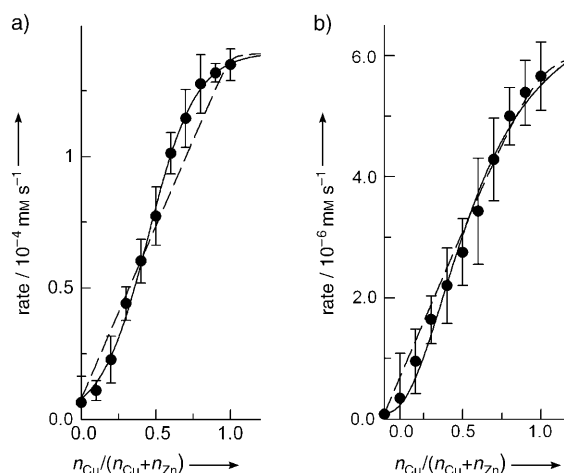
[\*\*] G.F.Z.S. dedicates this work to his parents for their unyielding support. The authors dedicate this work to the Kelley and Sotolongo families for their unfortunate experience with Alzheimer's disease. Our research on the structure and activity of metallopeptides was partially supported by the Research and Creative Award of the University of South Florida and the Petroleum Research Fund administered by the American Chemical Society (PRF AC #40851-AC3). We thank John Kelley for the modification of the picture for the Table of Contents.



**Figure 1.** a) Saturation profile for the oxidation of phenol (■), deuterated phenol (□), and catechol (●) in the absence of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ . b) The effect of the concentration of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  on the first-order rate constant  $k_{\text{cat}}$  toward the oxidation of phenol (■) and catechol (●). c) The production of *o*-quinone from phenol in the absence of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  is monitored by the increase in the absorption as a result of the formation of its adduct with 3-methyl-2-benzothiazolinone hydrazone (MBTH). d, e) Hanes plot analysis of kinetic data from parts (a) and (b), with  $[\text{H}_2\text{O}_2] = 0, 5, 10, 20,$  and  $30 \text{ mM}$  from top to bottom.

oxidation of catechol by  $\text{CuA}\beta_{1-20}$ , consistent with the catalytic cycle of catechol oxidase.<sup>[13]</sup>

The presence of the reactive oxygen species  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  (25 mM) significantly enhances the turnover and catalytic efficiency of  $\text{CuA}\beta_{1-20}$  toward catechol oxidation, yielding  $k_{\text{cat}} = 0.531 \text{ s}^{-1}$  and  $K'_{\text{app}} = 0.342 \text{ mM}$ , and a significant second-order rate constant  $k_{\text{cat}}/K' = 1.51 \times 10^3 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$  from the Hanes plot [Eq. (4) and Figure 1e]<sup>[18,19]</sup> for a random two-substrate reaction, in which the binding of the two substrates  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  and catechol are independent of each other. Note, the second-order rate constant for catechol oxidation is only about



**Figure 2.** Oxidative activity of  $\text{CuA}\beta_{1-20}$  toward the oxidation of a) DTC and b) phenol in the absence of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  as a function of the mole fraction of  $\text{Cu}^{\text{II}}$  at a constant total concentration of  $\text{Cu}^{\text{II}}$  and  $\text{Zn}^{\text{II}}$  at pH 7.0 and 25 °C. The solid lines show the fit to the Hill equation, and the dotted lines are the fits to a quadratic binding pattern with a metal/ligand ratio of 1:1.

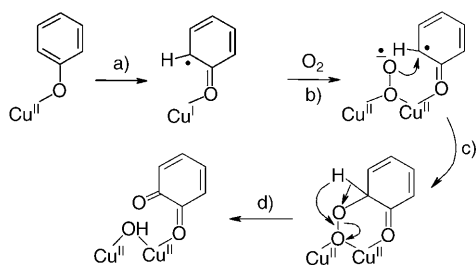
20 times lower than that for catechol oxidase extracted from gypsywort.<sup>[20]</sup> This pathway is consistent with the so-called peroxide shunt in the action of catechol oxidase in the presence of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  for which a  $\text{Cu}_2^{\text{II}}-\mu-\eta^2-\eta^2$ -peroxo intermediate is proposed to be the active species.<sup>[6]</sup> The oxidation of catechol to form *o*-quinone in the absence and presence of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  exhibits remarkable rate accelerations ( $3.25 \times 10^5$  and  $1.12 \times 10^6$  fold, respectively) in terms of the first-order rate constant  $k_{\text{cat}}$  relative to that for aerobic autooxidation of catechol in the absence of  $\text{CuA}\beta_{1-20}$  ( $k_0 = 4.74 \times 10^{-7} \text{ s}^{-1}$ ).

Owing to their inertness, metal-centered hydroxylation of phenol and its derivatives, particularly polychlorophenols, poses some challenging tasks in chemical synthesis and environmental detoxification and remediation<sup>[21]</sup> and may provide further insight into the action of those metalloenzymes for the monooxygenation of arenes.<sup>[8,22]</sup> Besides the oxidation of catechol described above, phenol was hydroxylated and oxidized by  $\text{CuA}\beta_{1-20}$  in the presence of a saturating amount of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  ( $> 50.0 \text{ mM}$ ). The formation of *o*-quinone exhibited rate and dissociation constants of  $k_{\text{cat}} = 0.213 \text{ s}^{-1}$  and  $K'_{\text{app}} = 1.31 \text{ mM}$ , respectively, and  $k_{\text{cat}}/K' = 457 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$  from the Hanes plot (Figure 1a and d). This result represents a remarkable  $4.6 \times 10^6$ -fold rate acceleration for the hydroxylation/oxidation of phenol to form *o*-quinone in terms of  $k_{\text{cat}}$  relative to that for aerobic autooxidation of phenol ( $k_0 = 4.6 \times 10^{-8} \text{ s}^{-1}$ ). This reaction is expected to take place according to a dinuclear mechanism similar to the hydroxylation and oxidation of tyrosine by the dicopper enzyme tyrosinase, in which the active center is believed to contain dinuclear  $\mu-\eta^2-\eta^2$ -peroxo- $\text{Cu}_2^{\text{II}}$  species on the basis of spectroscopic studies.<sup>[8,16]</sup>

Cooperativity of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  in the oxidation of both catechol and phenol in terms of  $k_{\text{cat}}$  is observed upon titration of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  and is reflected in the sigmoidal activity profile with respect to the concentration of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  (Figure 1b). The data from the oxidation of catechol and phenol by  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  fit well to the Hill

equation [Eq. (3)], yielding Hill coefficients of  $\theta = 2.23$  and 1.78, respectively. Moreover, fitting of the rates to a random two-substrate reaction mechanism yields corrected  $K'$  values of 2.07 and 2.10 for phenol and catechol, respectively, and a cooperativity index based on the ratio  $K'_{app}/K'$  of 1.70 for  $H_2O_2$  in both phenol and catechol oxidation reactions. These values suggest a small cooperativity of  $H_2O_2$  and the independent binding of  $H_2O_2$  and phenol or catechol to the active center.

Of particular interest is the observation of a scarcely reported process, namely, aerobic  $Cu^{II}$ -centered hydroxylation and oxidation of phenol in the absence of  $H_2O_2$ .<sup>[23]</sup> The production of *o*-quinone from phenol catalyzed by  $CuA\beta_{1-20}$  follows pre-equilibrium kinetics, yielding  $k_{cat} = 3.90 \times 10^{-3} s^{-1}$  and  $K'_{app} = 1.23 mM$  (Figure 1 a) that represent an  $8.67 \times 10^4$ -fold first-order rate acceleration with respect to aerobic autooxidation of phenol. The  $k_{cat}$  value is lower than that for catechol oxidation and indicates that the hydroxylation step here must be the rate-limiting step. Otherwise, these two reactions would have similar  $k_{cat}$  values attributed to the oxidation of a bound catechol upon hydroxylation of a bound phenol. Moreover, the use of deuterated phenol as substrate reveals a significant kinetic isotope effect (KIE);  $k_{cat}$  values of  $1.12 \times 10^{-3}$  and  $0.0442 s^{-1}$  are obtained in the absence and presence, respectively, of  $H_2O_2$  (100 mM) and represent KIE values of 3.46 and 4.77, respectively. The results indicate that hydroxylation and cleavage of the *o*-C–H bond of phenol is the rate-limiting step, which is followed by a faster step to form *o*-quinone. The different KIE values for the hydroxylation of phenol in the presence and absence of  $H_2O_2$  suggest that the rate-determining step in these two cases may be different and/or possibly involve additional pathways. The  $K'_{app}$  values are not significantly different between phenol and deuterated phenol (1.31 and 1.23 mM for the latter in the presence and absence of  $H_2O_2$ , respectively) which suggests that  $k_{cat}$  does not significantly contribute to the magnitude of  $K'_{app}$  and that the two substrates may have a similar binding mode. The mechanistic reasoning for the conversion of phenol to *o*-quinone may be attributed to the fact that the  $Cu^{II}/Cu^I$  redox equilibrium can be achieved upon phenol binding, followed by electron transfer to afford a  $Cu^I$ -phenol radical, which is thought to be stabilized through resonance structures with delocalization of the free radical at the *ortho* and *para* positions<sup>[23a]</sup> (Figure 3, step a). This intermediate is

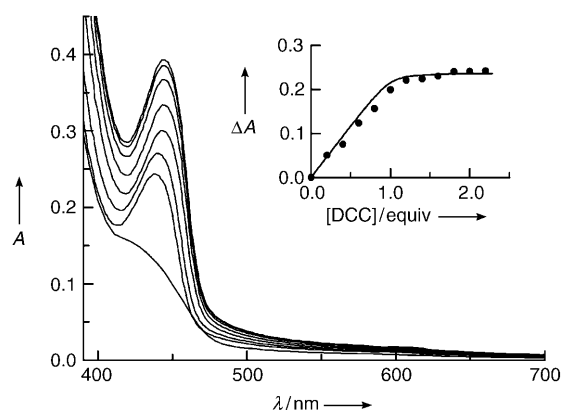


**Figure 3.** Proposed mechanism for aerobic hydroxylation and oxidation of phenol in the absence of  $H_2O_2$ , with the binding of phenol and reduction of the metal center as the key step (a). The binding of dioxygen and formation of superoxide (b) is proposed to be assisted by a dinuclear center. See text for details.

then attacked by dioxygen and followed by electron transfer to possibly form a  $Cu^{II}$  superoxide center which may be further stabilized by a dinuclear center (step b). It was proposed previously that the free radical was attached directly by triplet dioxygen<sup>[23a]</sup> which, however, is not symmetrically favorable. Coupling of the superoxide radical to the bound phenol radical at an *ortho* position is then expected to be a favorable step (step c), which is followed by transfer of electrons and an oxygen atom to afford the final quinone product (step d). Involvement of a dinuclear center for the catalysis is possible as discussed below.

As the hydroxylation and oxidation of phenol is a multi-electron-transfer process, the involvement of two metal centers is suspected. The activity profile for phenol oxidation is similar to that for the  $Zn^{II}$  dilution experiment for catechol oxidation. The data can be fitted equally well to the Hill equation [Eq. (3)] to afford  $\theta = 1.80$  ( $r^2 = 0.98$ ) and a quadratic equation for single-metal binding ( $r^2 = 0.98$ ), consistent with either a mononuclear oxidation<sup>[23]</sup> or a cooperative mechanism involving a dinuclear center,<sup>[16]</sup> or a combination of both pathways.

To monitor substrate binding, a “slow” substrate, 4,5-dichlorocatechol (DCC), which is approximately 200 times slower than catechol in terms of  $k_{cat}$ , was titrated into a solution of  $CuA\beta_{1-20}$  (0.2 mM) in the presence or absence of  $H_2O_2$  (100 mM) and monitored by UV/Vis spectroscopy at 25°C at pH 7.0 (Figure 4). Similar spectra were obtained



**Figure 4.** Titration of DCC to  $CuA\beta$  (0.2 mM) in the presence of  $H_2O_2$  (100 mM) in HEPES buffer (100 mM) at pH 7.0 monitored by UV/Vis spectroscopy. Analogous spectra were obtained in the absence of  $H_2O_2$ . The inset shows the change in absorbance at  $\lambda = 437 nm$  as a function of the number of equivalents of DCC added with respect to  $(Cu^{II}A\beta)_2$ , consistent with the formation of a 1:1 DCC- $(Cu^{II}A\beta)_2$  adduct.

through the course of the titration, indicating that  $H_2O_2$  was not involved in the binding of DCC to  $Cu^{II}A\beta$  under the experimental conditions. The absorption at 437 nm increased upon addition of DCC to  $(Cu^{II}A\beta)_2$  and reached saturation at more than 1.2 equivalents of DCC, and the data were fitted to a single-substrate binding model to yield a dissociation constant of 0.24 mM. The result provides direct evidence for catechol binding to a dicopper(II) center, consistent with the

observations with a chemical model<sup>[24]</sup> and the mechanism proposed above.

In conclusion, we have established the catalytic activities of CuA $\beta_{1-20}$  toward the relatively inactive species (according to their  $k_0$  values) catechol and phenol in the presence and absence of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> in aqueous solutions at near-physiological conditions. The reaction patterns are consistent with the mechanisms carried out by Type-3 copper centers as observed with catechol oxidase and tyrosinase and their dinuclear model systems.<sup>[8,22]</sup> So far these results are unique in metal-centered redox chemistry related to Alzheimer's disease and are expected to offer further insight into the neuropathology of this disease, as it is suspected to be linked with, besides many other factors, the oxidation of mono- and diphenol-containing neurotransmitters such as dopamine, epinephrine, norepinephrine, and serotonin.<sup>[25,26]</sup> Furthermore, the association of this highly reactive Cu–oxygen chemistry with Alzheimer's disease can better define the role of metallo- $\beta$ -amyloids in the neuropathology of this disease and possibly lead to different treatment strategies toward this disease.

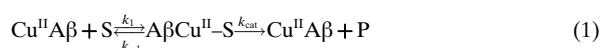
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$$v = v_{\text{bg}} + \frac{k_{\text{cat}}[\text{CuA}\beta][\text{S}]}{K'_{\text{app}} + [\text{S}]} \quad (2)$$

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$$\frac{v_0}{v_{\text{max}}} = \frac{[\text{CuA}\beta]^\theta}{K_x + [\text{CuA}\beta]^\theta} \quad (3)$$

- [18] In case of two-substrate catalysis, such as phenol hydroxylation/oxidation and catechol oxidation in the presence of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>, both substrates can interact with the metal center independently. The data are fitted to the Hanes plot [Eq. (4)] to yield true values of substrate dissociation constants  $K'_i$ <sup>[19]</sup>

$$\frac{[\text{S}]}{v_0} = \frac{(1 + K'_i/[H_2O_2])}{v_{\text{max}}} [\text{S}] + \frac{K'}{v_{\text{max}}} \left( 1 + \frac{K_i}{[H_2O_2]} \right) \quad (4)$$

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