

Proton Transfer of Guanine Radical Cations Studied by Time-Resolved Resonance Raman Spectroscopy Combined with Pulse Radiolysis

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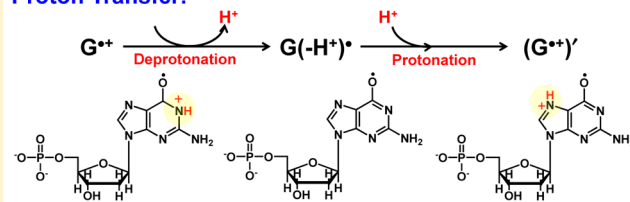
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S Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: The oxidation of guanine (G) is studied by using transient absorption and time-resolved resonance Raman spectroscopies combined with pulse radiolysis. The transient absorption spectral change demonstrates that the neutral radical of G ($G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$), generated by the deprotonation of G radical cation ($G^{\bullet+}$), is rapidly converted to other G radical species. The formation of this species shows the pH dependence, suggesting that it is the G radical cation ($G^{\bullet+}$)' formed from the protonation at the N7 of $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$. On one hand, most Raman bands of ($G^{\bullet+}$)' are up-shifted relative to those of G, indicating the increase in the bonding order of pyrimidine (Pyr) and imidazole rings. The ($G^{\bullet+}$)' exhibits the characteristic CO stretching mode at $\sim 1266\text{ cm}^{-1}$ corresponding to a C–O single bond, indicating that the unpaired electron in ($G^{\bullet+}$)' is localized on the oxygen of the Pyr ring.

Proton Transfer:



DNA damages induced by metabolic or hydrolytic processes lead to the DNA mutation and a variety of fatal diseases.¹ Among DNA damages, oxidative DNA damage occurs most frequently in cells and is caused by the reactive oxygen species (ROS), which are generated from normal cellular metabolism.^{2–8} Thus, the oxidative DNA damage is considered to be an inevitable cellular process. Furthermore, ROS are also produced by exogenous sources such as ionizing or ultraviolet (UV) radiation and carcinogenic compounds. Meanwhile, the reduction of DNA sequence is related to the DNA repair process. For example, cyclobutane pyrimidine dimers (CPD),^{9,10} which are major DNA lesions induced by UV radiation, can be repaired by one electron transfer from photosensitizers to the CPD lesion.^{11–14} From these points of view, the redox reactions in the DNA strand have been experimentally and theoretically investigated in the biochemical and biomedical field in terms of the DNA damage and the repair of damaged DNA.

It is well-known that the oxidative DNA damage is initiated by radical cations of nucleic acid bases formed by the reaction between nucleic acid bases and ROS.^{7,8} Therefore, the characterization of structures and reactivities of radical cations of four nucleotides is crucial for understanding DNA damage and repair processes. Furthermore, the proton transfer occurring in aqueous solution containing four nucleotides is coupled to numerous biological reactions. In this respect, numerous theoretical and experimental studies have been exclusively focused on the oxidation of guanine (G), because G

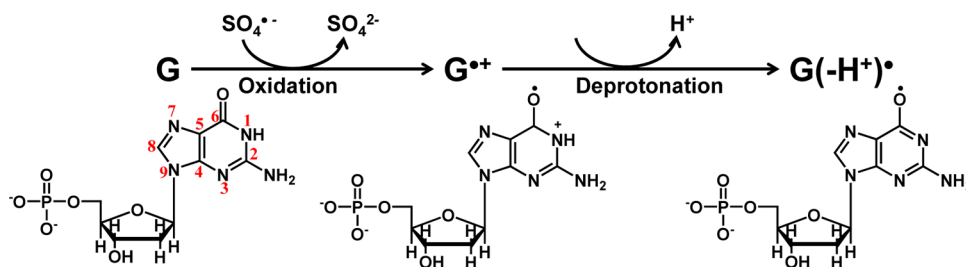
with the lowest oxidation potential among four nucleotides (A, T, G, and C) is easily oxidized to G radical cation, $G^{\bullet+}$.^{15–18} Moreover, it has been suggested that $G^{\bullet+}$ in aqueous solution quickly converts to the neutral radical ($G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$) through the loss of imino proton N1–H (deprotonation) (see Scheme 1).^{19–24} However, the structure and reactivity of $G^{\bullet+}$ and $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$ are still unclear. Indeed, various structures for $G^{\bullet+}$ and $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$ have been suggested, as depicted in Figure S1. The ESR experiment conducted by Rakvin et al. demonstrated that in 2'-deoxyguanosine-5'-monophosphate (5'-dGMP), $G^{\bullet+}$ generated during the γ -irradiation at 4.2 K shows the large spin density at the oxygen of the Pyr ring (C6–O).¹⁹ Meanwhile, some research groups suggested that the spin density in $G^{\bullet+}$ is localized mainly on the N3, C5, N7, or C8-sites.^{25–28} In addition, the proton transfer and reactivity of $G^{\bullet+}$ generated from oxidation of G are still matters of debate.^{27–31} To address these issues, we have investigated the structure and reactivity of $G^{\bullet+}$ and $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$ by using time-resolved resonance Raman (TR³) and ultraviolet–visible (UV–vis) absorption spectroscopies combined with pulse radiolysis. Because pulse radiolysis can selectively and efficiently generate radical ions during the irradiation with high-energy electrons, this method has been used extensively to study the reactivity of radical ions generated from the redox reactions of various molecules.^{32–37} On the

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Scheme 1. Representative Oxidation of Guanine (G) and the Deprotonation of G^{•+}

other hand, TR³ spectroscopy is a powerful technique for elucidating the structures of radical ions generated during pulse radiolysis in a vibrational level.^{38–40} In the present study, we clearly observed for the first time the protonation of G[•](–H⁺) occurring with a rate constant of $8.1 \times 10^6 \text{ s}^{-1}$: $\text{G}^{\bullet}(-\text{H}^+) + \text{H}^+ \rightarrow (\text{G}^{\bullet+})'$. Furthermore, Raman signals of G radical ions generated during pulse radiolysis are reported for the first time, to the best of our knowledge, and we discuss the structures and reactivities of G^{•+} and G[•](–H⁺) based on the results obtained from transient absorption and TR³ experiments.

To study the structure and reactivity of G^{•+} generated during the pulse radiolysis, we used 2'-deoxyguanosine-5'-monophosphate (5'-dGMP). The G^{•+} can be easily formed by the oxidation of G using pulse radiolysis. The hydrated electron (e_{aq}^-) generated during pulse radiolysis in aqueous solution containing ammonium persulfate ((NH₄)₂S₂O₈) and *tert*-butyl alcohol (as the scavenger of OH radicals) quickly reacts with a peroxydisulfate (S₂O₈²⁻) to produce sulfate radical anion (SO₄^{•-}), which is a strong oxidant (eq 1).^{41,42} Then, G is oxidized to G^{•+} by SO₄^{•-} (eq 2).⁴¹

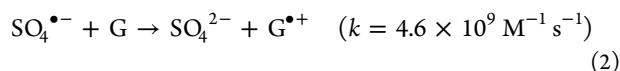
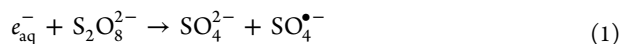


Figure 1a shows the transient absorption spectra observed at various times after an 8 ns electron pulse during pulse radiolysis of 50 mM 5'-dGMP in 100 mM Na phosphate buffer (pH 7.4) containing 0.1 M ammonium persulfate ((NH₄)₂S₂O₈) and 0.1 M *tert*-butyl alcohol. As shown in Figure 1a, the absorption spectrum observed at $\Delta t = 30$ ns has two absorption bands with maxima located around 380 and 520 nm. The absorption signal around 380 nm increased at short delay times ($\Delta t = 30\text{--}300$ ns) and then decreased in the long delay time ($>1 \mu\text{s}$), whereas the broad signal around 520 nm concomitantly decreases with a blue-shift as increasing the delay time. The time profile of the transient absorption at 400 nm shows the fast rising and slow decay features, while the time profile measured at 570 nm exhibits the fast and slow decay features (see the inset in Figure 1a). Both time profiles measured at 400 and 570 nm were well reproduced by a biexponential function, as shown in Figure 1a. The rate constant for the rise component observed at 400 nm is close to that for the fast decay component observed at 570 nm. Therefore, two time profiles measured at 400 and 570 nm are analyzed by the global fitting using a biexponential function. From the global fitting analysis, the rate constant for the rise component observed at 400 nm is determined to be $8.1 \pm 0.2 \times 10^6 \text{ s}^{-1}$ (~ 123 ns) (see Figure S2).

The absorption spectrum observed at $\Delta t = 30$ ns is similar to that of G[•](–H⁺) assigned by Candeias and Steenken,⁴¹ implying that the absorption spectrum observed at $\Delta t = 30$

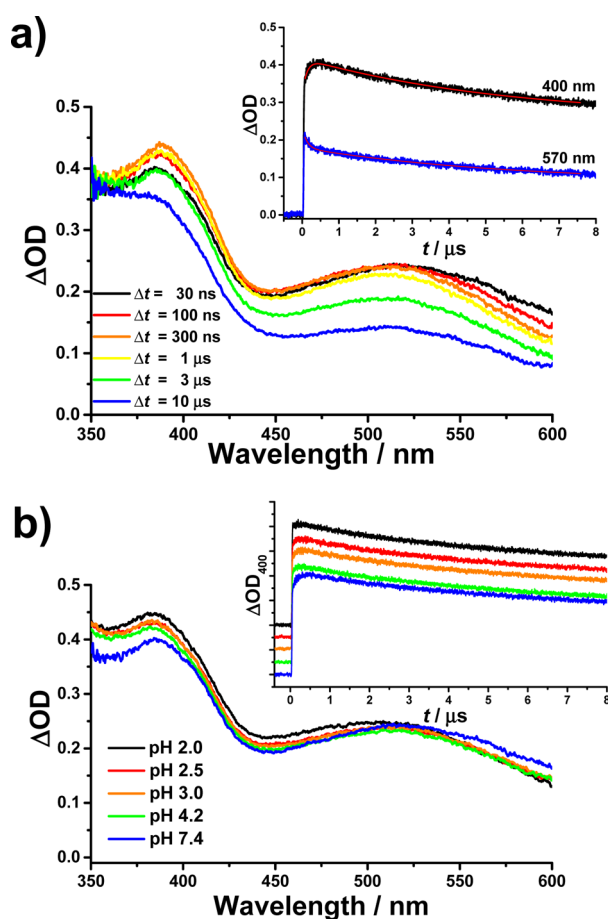


Figure 1. (a) Transient absorption spectra observed at various times after an 8 ns electron pulse during pulse radiolysis of 5'-dGMP in 100 mM Na phosphate buffer (pH 7.4) containing 0.1 M ammonium persulfate ((NH₄)₂S₂O₈) and 0.1 M *tert*-butyl alcohol. The inset shows the decay profiles monitored at 400 and 579 nm. (b) Transient absorption spectra observed at 30 ns after an 8 ns electron pulse during pulse radiolysis of 5'-dGMP as a function of the pH value. The inset shows the decay profiles monitored at 400 nm in solutions with various pH values.

ns may be attributed to G[•](–H⁺) and the G^{•+} converts to the G[•](–H⁺) within 30 ns. Considering the rate constant on the formation of G^{•+} ($4.6 \times 10^9 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$) and the concentration of 5'-dGMP (50 mM), the G^{•+} under experimental conditions is formed within the laser pulse width (<7 ns). In addition, Stemp et al. suggested that the loss of imino proton at N1 takes place within 50 ns.⁴³ Kobayashi et al. also revealed that in the case of free G base (5'-dGMP), the imino proton N1–H is released into solvent with a rate constant of $1.8 \times 10^7 \text{ s}^{-1}$ (~ 56 ns) at pH 7.0 because of the low pK_a value of N1–H (pK_a 3.9) of

$G^{\bullet+}$.²⁰ These previous results are consistent with our result and support the fact that the absorption spectrum observed at $\Delta t = 30$ ns is attributed to $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$, which is formed by the deprotonation of $G^{\bullet+}$ occurring within 30 ns. On one hand, the deprotonation rate of $G^{\bullet+}$ determined in the present study is much faster than those observed from various DNA strands. In dsDNA with a G–C base pair formed by hydrogen bonding, the imino proton N1–H of $G^{\bullet+}$ is transferred to N3 of cytosine (C) with a rate constant of $(3.3\text{--}3.6) \times 10^6 \text{ s}^{-1}$ at pH 7.0.²⁰ In contrast to free G base and dsDNA, Wu et al. demonstrated that the deprotonation of $G^{\bullet+}$ generated from G-quadruplex occurs at N2–H with a rate constant of $2.1 \times 10^5 \text{ s}^{-1}$ at pH 7.0.⁴⁴ It is known that in both dsDNA and G-quadruplex, the deprotonation process from $G^{\bullet+}$ to $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$ leads to the red-shift in the absorption band around 520 nm.^{20,45} However, the fast dynamics of $8.1 \times 10^6 \text{ s}^{-1}$ observed in the present study leads to the blue-shift in the transient absorption band, as depicted in Figure 1a. Therefore, we conclude that the absorption spectra observed at $\Delta t = 30$ ns is attributed to $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$ and that the process with the rate constant of $8.1 \times 10^6 \text{ s}^{-1}$ is not due to the deprotonation process of $G^{\bullet+}$ but is attributed to an unknown reaction of $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$.

To further elucidate the process with the rate constant of $8.1 \times 10^6 \text{ s}^{-1}$, the pH dependence on the oxidation of G was investigated by a transient absorption measurement using pulse radiolysis. When the pH value decreased, the absorption signal around 380 nm increased, as shown in Figure 1b, whereas the broad signal around 520 nm is slightly blue-shifted. The rising feature in the time profile measured at 400 nm gradually disappeared with decreasing pH value. Notably, as depicted in Figure 2, the rate constant for the rise component increases

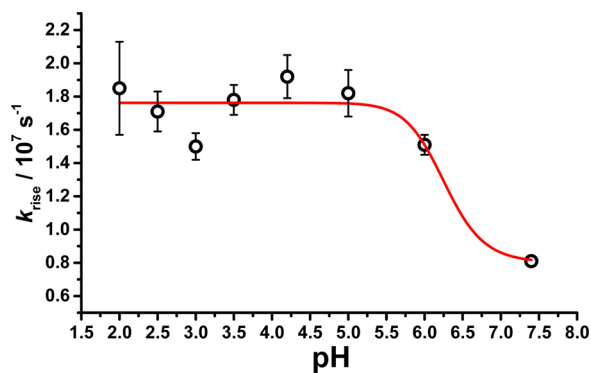


Figure 2. pH dependence on the rate constants determined from the rise component of the decay profiles measured at 400 nm.

with decreasing pH value and then shows the constant values in the low pH solutions (pH < 5.0), indicating that the fast dynamics observed in the present study is dependent on the pH of the solution. Generally, the deprotonation process in solution with a pH lower than the pK_a value should slowly occur because of the higher proton concentration. Consequently, the rate constant for the deprotonation process should decrease with the decrease of the pH value. However, as shown in Figure 2, the opposite result was observed. That is, the rate constant for the fast dynamics increased with decreasing pH value. This result indicates that the fast dynamics is not due to the deprotonation process but is probably due to the protonation of $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$, leading to the formation of other G radical species ($(G^{\bullet+})'$; $G^{\bullet}(-H^+) + H^+ \rightarrow (G^{\bullet+})'$). Thus, the slower decay component with a long lifetime

is attributed to $(G^{\bullet+})'$. The protonation of $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$ to $(G^{\bullet+})'$ will be further discussed later.

To clarify the structures of $G^{\bullet+}$, $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$, and $(G^{\bullet+})'$, we measured the TR³ spectra of 50 mM 5'-dGMP in 100 mM Na phosphate buffer (pH 7.4) by using a 532 nm laser pulse. Figure 3 shows the TR³ spectra observed at various times after

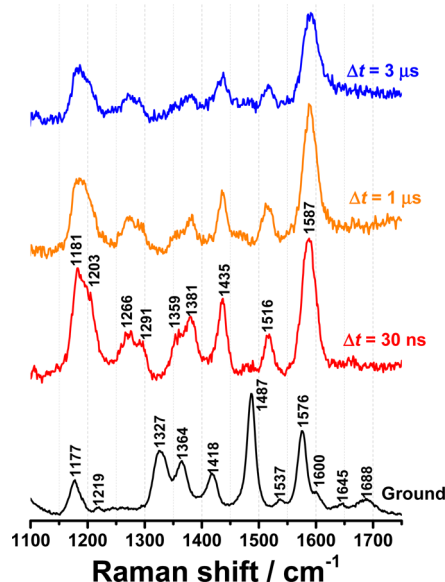


Figure 3. TR³ spectra observed at various times after an 8 ns electron pulse during pulse radiolysis of 50 mM 5'-dGMP in 100 mM Na phosphate buffer (pH 7.4; $\lambda_{\text{Ex}} = 532$ nm).

an 8 ns electron pulse during pulse radiolysis of 5'-dGMP in 100 mM Na phosphate buffer containing 0.1 M ammonium persulfate ($(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{S}_2\text{O}_8$) and 0.1 M *tert*-butyl alcohol. Based on the assignments of resonance Raman spectra of 5'-dGMP, as reported by Toyama et al.⁴⁶ and Fodor et al.,⁴⁷ Raman bands of 5'-dGMP (G) in 100 mM Na phosphate buffer are assigned and listed in Table 1. In the case of 5'-dGMP, the more intensive peaks appear at 1327, 1487, and 1576 cm^{-1} , which are attributed to the Im (N7) ring stretching, Pyr ring CN stretching coupled with 8-CH deformation, and Pyr (N3) ring stretching, respectively. The Raman band due to C6=O stretching is observed at 1688 cm^{-1} . It is worth noting that, as shown in Figure 3, the TR³ spectra measured at various times after an 8 ns electron pulse during pulse radiolysis of 5'-dGMP are very similar. This is unexpected because the protonation of $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$ with a rate constant of $8.1 \times 10^6 \text{ s}^{-1}$ should bring about the difference between TR³ spectra measured at $\Delta t = 30$ ns and $\geq 1 \mu\text{s}$. However, the experimental results clearly showed that the TR³ spectra are independent of the delay time, although the intensities of Raman bands are slightly decreased with increasing delay time. The similarity in TR³ spectra measured at 30 ns and $\geq 1 \mu\text{s}$ implies that all TR³ spectra measured at various delay times after an 8 ns electron pulse are attributed to the same transient species. Considering the lifetime of each G radical species obtained by transient absorption experiments, the observed TR³ spectra are originated probably from $(G^{\bullet+})'$. One cannot rule out the possibility that Raman bands for $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$ are not affected by the protonation. However, this possibility is in contrast to the fact that the protonation of a chemical species can significantly affect its molecular geometry and Raman band. Therefore, we

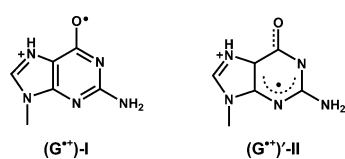
Table 1. Raman Bands Observed for 5'-dGMP and (G^{•+})' in 100 mM Na Phosphate Buffer (pH 7.4) Containing 0.1 M Ammonium Persulfate ((NH₄)₂S₂O₈) and 0.1 M *tert*-Butyl Alcohol

assignment of Raman bands	5'-dGMP (cm ⁻¹)	(G ^{•+})' (cm ⁻¹)
Pyr(N3) pyrimidine ring mode localized at N ₃	1177	1181
Im(C8-N9) vibration mode localized at the C8-N9 linkage	1219	–
C–O single bond	–	1266
Im(N7) Vibration localized within the imidazole ring	1327	1359
C2=N3–C4–N9 stretch; stretch mode of the C ₂ =N ₃ –C ₄ –N ₉ moiety	1364	1381
Pyr + Im vibration involving both the pyrimidine and imidazole ring	1418	1435
Pyr ring CN stretch + 8-CH def	1487	1516
Pyr + Im vibration delocalized over the pyrimidine and imidazole ring	1537	–
Pyr(N3) pyrimidine ring mode contributed largely from a motion of N ₃	1576	1587
Pyr(C2) + N1–H bend pyrimidine ring mode largely localized at C ₂ and weakly coupled with the N ₁ –H bend	1600	–
C2–NH ₂ scissors	1645	–
C6=O stretch	1688	–

suggest that the TR³ spectra observed at various times after an 8 ns electron pulse during pulse radiolysis of G are dominantly attributed to (G^{•+})' rather than G[•](–H⁺), suggesting that the vibrational modes of (G^{•+})' are more Raman active than those of G[•](–H⁺).

The TR³ spectrum of (G^{•+})', shown in Figure 3, is significantly different from that of G. Most Raman bands measured for (G^{•+})' are up-shifted relative to those of G. In particular, the largest shifts were observed for TR³ bands at 1359 and 1516 cm⁻¹, corresponding to Im (N7) and Pyr ring CN stretching coupled with 8-CH deformation, respectively. The observed up-shifts imply that the whole bond strengths of Pyr and Im rings for (G^{•+})' are relatively larger than those for G. In the TR³ bands of (G^{•+})', the most prominent peak is observed at 1266 cm⁻¹. It is noteworthy that the Raman band at 1688 cm⁻¹ corresponding to C6=O stretching observed for G disappears upon the oxidation, followed by the appearance of a new Raman band at 1266 cm⁻¹. The absence of the C6=O stretching mode at >1600 cm⁻¹ in (G^{•+})' means the decrease of the C=O double-bond character. In other words, this result implies that the unpaired electron in (G^{•+})' is localized on the oxygen of the Pyr ring or is delocalized on the Pyr ring, consequently leading to the decrease of the C=O double-bond order. Based on this result, two structures for (G^{•+})' shown in Scheme 2 can be expected: one is (G^{•+})'-I with a C–O single bond due to an unpaired electron localized on the oxygen of the Pyr ring, and the other is (G^{•+})'-II with a partial C[•]–O double bond formed by an unpaired electron delocalized on the Pyr ring. Generally, it has been accepted that in phenoxyl

Scheme 2. Structures of (G^{•+})'



radical, the Raman bands corresponding to a C–O single bond and a partial C[•]–O double bond appear at ~1250 and ~1510 cm⁻¹, respectively.^{48–52} Thus, we suggest that the Raman band at 1266 cm⁻¹ is originated from a C–O single bond for (G^{•+})', although the 1266 cm⁻¹ frequency is slightly higher than that of a C–O single bond measured from phenoxyl radical. On the other hand, one cannot rule out the possibility that the Raman band at 1516 cm⁻¹ is attributed to a partial C[•]–O double-bond stretching of (G^{•+})'-II formed by an unpaired electron delocalized on the Pyr ring. The delocalization of an unpaired electron on the Pyr ring upon oxidation induces the decrease of the bond strength in the Pyr ring, resulting in the down-shift of Raman bands related to the Pyr ring. However, as mentioned above, most of Raman bands measured for (G^{•+})' are slightly up-shifted compared to those for G. This result indicates that the Raman band at 1516 cm⁻¹ is attributed to the Pyr ring CN stretching coupled with 8-CH deformation, but not a partial C[•]–O double-bond stretching. Therefore, we suggest that (G^{•+})' exists dominantly as a (G^{•+})'-I with a C–O single bond. Candeias and Steenken suggested that the unpaired electron in (G^{•+})' resides mainly on the oxygen of the Pyr ring (C6–O), although various tautomers due to the high aromaticity coexist in aqueous solutions.⁴¹ Rakvin et al. also demonstrated that the large spin density in G^{•+} was observed at the O6-site.¹⁹ These previous results imply that the unpaired electron may be localized on the oxygen of the Pyr ring and support our suggestion that the unpaired electron in (G^{•+})' is localized on the oxygen of the Pyr ring. Furthermore, we also suggest that the unpaired electron in G^{•+} and G[•](–H⁺) is localized on the oxygen of the Pyr ring, but not on the N3, C5, N7, or C8 sites.

On the basis of the results obtained in the present study, we consider the proton transfer between G[•](–H⁺) and the water molecule, especially the protonation process of G[•](–H⁺), (G[•](–H⁺) + H⁺ → (G^{•+})'). It is well-known that the pK_a of N1 in G^{•+} is 3.9.^{20,41} In addition, our experimental result demonstrates that the deprotonation at N1 of G^{•+} rapidly occurs within 30 ns. Stemp et al. also suggested that the loss of imino proton at N1 takes place within 50 ns.⁴³ Considering the deprotonation rate (*k*_d > 3.3 × 10⁷ s⁻¹), the pK_a of 3.9, and the pH value of the solution (pH ~7), the protonation rate constant *k*_p at N1 can be estimated to be about ≥2.6 × 10⁴ s⁻¹ under the experimental conditions. The small value for *k*_p implies that the reprotonation at N1 takes place in the time range of the microsecond. From this point of view, in G[•](–H⁺), N3 and N7 can be considered as a protonation site, but not N1. Giese and McNaughton demonstrated that the proton affinity for protonation at N7 of G is calculated to be 945 kJ mol⁻¹,⁵³ which is close to that reported by Greco et al. (951 ± 48 kJ mol⁻¹).⁵⁴ Giese and McNaughton also suggested that N7, and not N3, is the preferred protonation site in both aqueous solution and solid states. Steenken suggested that G^{•+} in the neutral solutions is in equilibrium with (G^{•+})' (see Scheme II in ref 55).⁵⁵ Tomasz et al. proposed that the isotope exchange at the C8-site of the Im ring requires the protonation at N7 as a first step at various pH values at 37 °C,⁵⁶ meaning that the N7 of the Im ring can be easily protonated under the physiological conditions. Therefore, we suggest that the fast dynamics observed in the transient absorption measurement is due to the protonation at N7 of G[•](–H⁺). As mentioned above, the protonation at N7 of G[•](–H⁺) may greatly affect the molecular geometry of the Im ring, resulting in the large shift of a Raman band. Among Raman bands for G[•](–H⁺), indeed, the

largest upshift was observed for vibration within the Im (N7) ring, supporting that the protonation site in $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$ is the N7, but not N3. The plot of the rate constant against the pH value (Figure 2) demonstrates that the pK_a of N7 in $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$ may be higher than 6.0. This means that the $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$ can be easily converted to $(G^{\bullet+})'$ under the physiological conditions.

In conclusion, we have studied the oxidation of G, which has the lowest oxidation potential among four nucleotides (A, T, G, and C), by using the transient absorption and TR³ spectroscopies combined with pulse radiolysis. Although the redox reaction in the DNA strand has been extensively investigated in the fields of biomedical science and nanobiotechnology, the proton transfer of radical cations of four nucleotides are still unclear. The results presented herein show that the $G^{\bullet+}$ formed by one-electron oxidation rapidly releases the imino proton N1–H into water within an 8 ns electron pulse, resulting in the formation of $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$. In addition, the $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$ is converted to another G protonated radical cation ($(G^{\bullet+})'$) with a rate constant of $8.1 \times 10^6 \text{ s}^{-1}$: $G^{\bullet}(-H^+) + H^+ \rightarrow (G^{\bullet+})'$. In $G^{\bullet}(-H^+)$, N7 is considered as a protonation site, but not N1 and N3.

In addition, Raman signals of G radical ions generated upon pulse radiolysis were measured, for the first time, in the present study. The TR³ bands for 5'-dGMP are assigned to those of $(G^{\bullet+})'$. The $(G^{\bullet+})'$ exhibited the characteristic CO stretching mode at $\sim 1266 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ corresponding to a C–O single bond. The result presented herein demonstrates that $(G^{\bullet+})'$ exists as $(G^{\bullet+})'-I$ with a C–O single bond due to an unpaired electron localized on the oxygen of the Pyr ring. Considering the structure of $(G^{\bullet+})'$ and Tomasz's proposal,⁵⁶ the $(G^{\bullet+})'$ may act as a precursor for the formation of 8-oxo- G^{\bullet} by OH addition in aqueous solutions. The results provided herein can help in understanding the oxidative DNA damage occurring in cells through the reactions with ROS.

■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website at DOI: 10.1021/acs.jpcllett.5b02313.

Experimental methods including sample preparation, pulse radiolysis, and TR³ spectroscopy combined with pulse radiolysis; the proposed structures of $G^{\bullet+}$; absorbance changes at 400 and 570 nm after pulse radiolysis of 5'-dGMP in 100 mM Na phosphate buffer (pH 7.4); and residuals of global fitting results (PDF)

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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