Selective Methane Oxybromination over Nanostructured Ceria Catalysts

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ABSTRACT

This article studies the impact of the carrier type (MgO, SiO₂, SiC, Al₂O₃, ZrO₂) and synthesis method (dry impregnation, coprecipitation, hydrothermal synthesis, mechanochemical synthesis) on the structure, redox properties, and performance of supported CeO₂ catalysts for methane oxybromination. Major distinctions are evidenced in the product distribution with respect to bulk CeO₂, and the selectivity to methyl bromide (CH₃Br) varies in the following order: CeO₂/MgO (61-81%) > CeO₂/SiC (56-73%) ~ CeO₂/SiO₂ (52-71%) > bulk CeO₂ (40%) ~ CeO₂/ZrO₂ > CeO₂/Al₂O₃ (28-35%) at 6-40% methane conversion. The selectivity is primarily governed by the catalyst propensity to combust CH₃Br and byproduct dibromomethane (CH₂Br₂), which is strongly affected by the choice of the carrier. Specifically, the formation of carbon oxides is substantially suppressed over CeO₂ nanoparticles stabilized on basic MgO (CO_x selectivity <10%) with respect to bulk CeO₂ (CO_x selectivity ≥50%), whereas it is promoted by near atomic dispersions of CeO₂ on acidic ZrO₂ and Al₂O₃ carriers. Changes in the size and shape of CeO₂ nanoparticles on MgO had little impact on the selectivity, as they exhibit similar oxidation properties after exposure to the reaction environment. The synthesis-structure-performance relationships developed demonstrate the great potential of supporting CeO₂ to enhance the oxybromination performance.

KEYWORDS: natural gas upgrading, methane oxybromination, cerium oxide, support effects, magnesium oxide

1. INTRODUCTION

An amount of natural gas equivalent to about 18% of the US annual needs and worth *ca.* 13 billion USD is lost every year by flaring at far-flung fields (comprising >30% of known reserves) due to a lack of technologies enabling its economical on-site processing or transport to the centralized megaplants.¹⁻⁷ Among various routes that circumvent energy and capital intensive syngas generation,⁸⁻¹⁴ the bromine-mediated upgrading of methane emerged as an attractive technology to valorize this stranded natural gas,^{4,7,15-19} which has been demonstrated at plant scale.²⁰ It is based on the selective bromination of methane to methyl bromide (CH_3Br), the latter serving as a platform for the production of alcohols, ethers, gasolines, and aromatics *via* catalytic pathways similar to those of methanol. The feasibility of this technology relies on the efficient recovery of hydrogen bromide (HBr), which is formed in stoichiometric quantities in the bromination and subsequent CH_3Br upgrading steps.^{4,7,19,21-24} Compared to the reaction of methane with molecular bromine, methane oxybromination (MOB) enables process intensification by using HBr and oxygen to convert methane into CH_3Br .^{5,12,22-24} Dibromomethane (CH_2Br_2) is the only polybrominated byproduct in this reaction, which can be transformed to CH_3Br *via* reproporationation or hydrodebromination.^{16,17,25} Still, the presence of oxygen in the reaction medium promotes combustion reactions, which is the main challenge for the implementation of MOB.^{7,22}

Several catalysts, including bulk $(\text{VO})_2\text{P}_2\text{O}_7$, FePO_4 , and EuOBr phases, have demonstrated promising selectivity to CH_3Br in MOB and relatively low selectivity to CO_x ($S(\text{CH}_3\text{Br}) = 81\text{-}64\%$, $S(\text{CO}_x) \leq 15\%$ at methane conversions of $X(\text{CH}_4) = 14\text{-}30\%$).²²⁻²⁴ In contrast, although CeO_2 would be an attractive candidate in view of its abundance and stability,²⁶⁻²⁹ tests over the bulk phase evidenced significant combustion under equivalent

conditions ($S(\text{CO}_x) = 30\text{-}45\%$ at $X(\text{CH}_4) = 15\text{-}30\%$).²²⁻²⁴. Interestingly, similar to some other processes catalyzed by CeO_2 ,³⁰⁻³⁴ the performance of this material in MOB was shown to be structure sensitive.¹⁹ Substantially enhanced selectivity to CH_3Br was achieved by tailoring the nanocrystal morphology (up to $S(\text{CH}_3\text{Br}) = 75\%$ at $X(\text{CH}_4) = 18\%$ over nanocubes), which was further improved by the addition of NiO_x ($S(\text{CH}_3\text{Br}) = 82\%$ at $X(\text{CH}_4) = 22\%$). Nonetheless, the formation of CO_x over nanocrystalline CeO_2 remained significant ($S(\text{CO}_x) \geq 17\%$).

In view of growing evidence that the formation of the C-Br bond in MOB results from the gas-phase reaction of methane with molecular bromine generated over the catalyst,^{22,23} selectivity losses can be primarily associated with the surface catalyzed combustion of methane, CH_3Br , and CH_2Br_2 . This can be approached by controlling *i*) the reaction conditions or *ii*) the catalyst properties, which are interlinked. Indeed, the evolution of CO_x over CeO_2 could be curbed by operating under a huge excess of HBr ($S(\text{CO}_x) = 2\%$ at $X(\text{CH}_4) = 20\%$), which was ascribed to the controlled surface reduction due to bromination of the outward catalyst structure under reaction conditions.²³ Another well-known strategy that allows tailoring of the geometric and electronic properties of CeO_2 catalysts comprises the dispersion over a suitable carrier.^{27,35-42} However, despite constituting a pivotal step towards catalyst scale-up, the impact of supporting of CeO_2 on the MOB performance has not been studied previously.

Herein, CeO_2 catalysts supported over commonly applied carriers: SiO_2 , SiC , Al_2O_3 , ZrO_2 , and MgO using different synthesis methods and relatively low active phase loading (≤ 2 wt.% CeO_2) are investigated in MOB. Their performance is correlated to the catalyst structure, its oxidizing potential, and propensity to brominate, as well as to the activity of the support in side combustion reactions. It is shown that supported CeO_2 catalysts might display substantially enhanced selectivity to CH_3Br and CH_2Br_2 and highly suppressed CO_x production.

2. EXPERIMENTAL

2.1. Catalyst preparation. Bulk CeO_2 (Sigma-Aldrich, nanopowder, 99.9%) was calcined at 973 K for 5 h in static air (heating rate 5 K min^{-1}) prior to the catalytic tests. If not stated otherwise, MgO ($\sim 20 \text{ nm}$, Strem Chemicals, $\geq 99\%$), SiO_2 (20-60 μm , Evonik, AEROPERL[®] 300/30, $\geq 99.0\%$), SiC ($< 100 \text{ nm}$, Sigma-Aldrich, $\geq 99\%$), ZrO_2 ($\leq 60 \mu\text{m}$, Alfa-Aesar, 99%), and $\gamma\text{-Al}_2\text{O}_3$ (5-100 μm , Sasol, PURALOX[®] SCFa 140, $\geq 98\%$) were calcined using the same protocol as that for CeO_2 and stored under vacuum (50 mbar) at 373 K prior to their use as supports in the catalyst preparation.

Dry impregnation was used as a standard method to prepare CeO_2 catalysts supported over various carriers. Herein, $\text{Ce}(\text{NO}_3)_3 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (Aldrich, 99.9%) was dissolved in a volume of deionized water equal to the pore volume of the carrier in appropriate amounts to achieve 2 wt.% loading of CeO_2 . The precursor solutions were added dropwise to the carrier and the resulting materials were periodically mixed at room temperature for 1 h, then dried under vacuum (50 mbar) at 373 K for 12 h, and finally calcined in static air at 973 K for 5 h (heating rate 5 K min^{-1}). These catalysts were referred to as CeO_2/S , where S denotes the carrier.

Using an analogous protocol, a set of MgO-supported catalysts were prepared with reduced CeO_2 loading (0.1 and 0.5 wt.%, referred to as $\text{CeO}_2/\text{MgO-0.1}$ and $\text{CeO}_2/\text{MgO-0.5}$, respectively). A second series of catalysts with a CeO_2 loading of 0.5 wt.% were synthesized varying the temperature of the final calcination step (973, 1173, or 1373 K, denoted as $\text{CeO}_2/\text{MgO-0.5-973}$, $\text{CeO}_2/\text{MgO-0.5-1173}$, $\text{CeO}_2/\text{MgO-0.5-1373}$, respectively). In this case, the MgO carrier was calcined at 1373 K prior to use.

MgO-supported CeO_2 (2 wt.%) catalysts were also prepared by mechanochemical synthesis, coprecipitation, and hydrothermal synthesis. Mechanochemical synthesis was performed by

introducing $\text{Ce}(\text{NO}_3)_3 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ on the MgO carrier by impregnation. The resulting materials was transferred to a stainless steel jar (50 cm^3), filled with 12 stainless steel balls ($d_{\text{ball}} = 10\text{ mm}$, $W_{\text{ball}} = 7.8\text{ g}$) and ground in a planetary ball mill (Retch PM 200) for 4 h (500 rpm). Coprecipitation was conducted starting from a solution containing 0.006 M $\text{Ce}(\text{NO}_3)_3 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ and 1.2 M $\text{Mg}(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$, which was prepared by dissolving the metal salts in deionized water (200 cm^3). Hydrogen peroxide (53 cm^3 , Aldrich, 35 wt.%) was then added and the solution was stirred (500 rpm) for 1 h. Subsequently, aqueous ammonium hydroxide (Merck, 25 wt. %) was added dropwise until reaching a pH of 10, and the resulting slurry was aged for 2 h under stirring. The solids were recovered by filtration and washed with deionized water. For hydrothermal synthesis, MgO was suspended in a 6 M solution of NaOH (Fisher Chemicals, 99%) in deionized water (40 cm^3). A 0.4 M solution of $\text{Ce}(\text{NO}_3)_3 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ in deionized water (1.8 cm^3) was mixed with this slurry, stirred (500 rpm) for 2 h, then transferred into a Teflon-lined autoclave (50 cm^3), and hydrothermally treated at 453 K for 24 h. The solid was collected by filtration and washed with deionized water. The materials recovered after mechanochemical synthesis, coprecipitation, and hydrothermal synthesis were dried and calcined as described above for dry impregnation. The resulting catalysts were denoted as $\text{CeO}_2/\text{MgO-m}$, $\text{CeO}_2/\text{MgO-c}$, and $\text{CeO}_2/\text{MgO-h}$, respectively.

2.2. Catalyst characterization. Powder X-ray diffraction (XRD) was measured using a PANalytical X'Pert PRO-MPD diffractometer with Bragg-Brentano geometry by applying $\text{Cu-K}\alpha$ radiation ($\lambda = 1.54060\text{ \AA}$). The data were recorded in the $10\text{-}70^\circ\ 2\theta$ range with an angular step size of 0.017° and a counting time of 2.04 s per step. The average size of CeO_2 crystallites was estimated from the broadening of the $\{111\}$ reflection of CeO_2 by using Scherrer equation with dimensionless shape factor, $K = 0.9$. N_2 sorption at 77 K was performed using a

Micromeritics TriStar analyzer. Samples were evacuated to 50 mbar at 573 K for 12 h prior to the measurement. The Brunauer-Emmett-Teller (BET) method was applied to calculate the specific surface area, S_{BET} . The pore volume of the catalyst carriers, V_{pore} , was determined from the amount of N_2 adsorbed at a relative pressure of $p/p_0 = 0.98$. The total cerium content in the supported catalysts was quantified by inductively coupled plasma optical emission spectroscopy (ICP-OES) using a Horiba Ultima 2 instrument equipped with photomultiplier tube detection. High-resolution transmission electron microscopy (HRTEM), high-angle annular dark field scanning transmission electron microscopy (HAADF-STEM), and elemental mapping with energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDXS) were conducted on a FEI Talos microscope operated at 200 kV. All samples were dispersed as dry powders onto lacey carbon coated nickel grids. The average size of CeO_2 nanoparticles was calculated by examining over 50 nanoparticles. Fast Fourier transforms of selected areas of HRTEM images were calculated using ImageJ software. Raman spectroscopy was performed on a WITec CRM200 confocal Raman system using a 532 nm laser with 20 mW power, a 100 $\times$ objective lens with numerical aperture NA = 0.9 (Nikon Plan) and a fiber-coupled grating spectrometer (2400 lines per mm), giving a spectral sampling resolution of 0.7 cm^{-1} . X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) measurements were performed on a Physical Electronics Quantum 2000 X-ray photoelectron spectrometer using monochromatic $\text{Al-K}\alpha$ radiation, generated from an electron beam operated at 15 kV, and equipped with a hemispherical capacitor electron-energy analyzer. The solids were analyzed at an electron take-off angle of 45 $^\circ$ and a pass energy of 46.95 eV. In order to suppress sample charging during analysis an electron and an ion neutralizer were operated simultaneously. Remaining charging effects were corrected by referencing all spectra to adventitious carbon (C 1s at 284.5 eV). The elemental concentrations were quantified based on the measured

photoelectron peak areas (Br 3*d*, Ce 3*d*) after Shirley background subtraction using PHI-MultiPak software and the built-in relative sensitivity factors, which are corrected for the system transmission function. The fractions of different oxidation states of cerium were estimated by deconvolution of the Ce 3*d* peak.

2.3. Catalyst testing. Methane oxybromination, and CO, CH₃Br, CH₂Br₂, and HBr oxidation were performed at ambient pressure in a continuous-flow fixed-bed reactor setup (**Figure S1**), which has been described previously.²⁴ Gases: CH₄ (PanGas, purity 5.0), HBr (Air Liquide, purity 2.8, anhydrous), O₂ (PanGas, purity 5.0), CH₃Br (PanGas, 5 mol% in He 5.0), CO (Messer, 5 mol% in He 5.0), Ar (PanGas, purity 5.0; internal standard), and He (PanGas, purity 5.0; carrier gas), were supplied by a set of digital mass-flow controllers (Bronkhorst) to the mixing unit equipped with pressure indicator, and CH₂Br₂ (ABCR, 99%) was fed using a syringe pump (Nexus 6000, Chemyx) with a water-cooled glass syringe (Hamilton, 1 cm³) connected to a vaporizer operated at 343 K. A quartz reactor (internal diameter, d_i = 8 mm) was loaded with the catalyst (catalyst weight, W_{cat} = 0.2-1 g, particle size, d_p = 0.4-0.6 mm), which was well-mixed with quartz particles (Thommen-Furler, d_p = 0.2-0.3 mm) to ensure a constant bed volume (V_{bed} = 2 cm³), and placed in a homemade electrical oven. A K-type thermocouple fixed in a coaxial quartz thermowell with the tip positioned in the center of the catalyst bed was used to monitor the temperature during the reaction. Prior to testing, the catalyst bed was heated in a He flow to the desired temperature (T = 423-823 K) and allowed to stabilize for at least 30 min before the reaction mixture was fed. The catalyst weights, total flow rates (F_T), and feed mixtures applied in the tests are summarized in **Table 1**.

Carbon-containing compounds (CH₄, CH₃Br, CH₂Br₂, CO, and CO₂) and Ar were quantified on-line *via* a gas chromatograph equipped with a GS-Carbon PLOT column coupled to mass

spectrometer (GC-MS, Agilent GC 6890, Agilent MSD 5973N). Quantification of Br₂ at the reactor outlet was performed by its absorption in an impinging bottle filled with 0.1 M KI solution (Br₂ + 3I⁻ → I₃⁻ + 2Br⁻) followed by iodometric titration (Mettler Toledo G20 Compact Titrator) of the formed triiodide (I₃⁻ + 2S₂O₃²⁻ → 3I⁻ + S₄O₆²⁻) with 0.01 M sodium thiosulfate solution (Aldrich, 99.99%).

The conversion of reactant *i*, *X*(*i*), (*i*: CH₄, CH₃Br, CH₂Br₂, or CO) was calculated using Eq. 1,

$$X(i) = \frac{n(i)^{\text{inlet}} - n(i)^{\text{outlet}}}{n(i)^{\text{inlet}}} \cdot 100, \% \quad \text{Eq. 1}$$

where $n(i)^{\text{inlet}}$ and $n(i)^{\text{outlet}}$ are the respective molar flows of the reactant *i* at the reactor inlet and outlet.

The conversion of HBr, *X*(HBr), was calculated according to Eq. 2,

$$X(\text{HBr}) = \frac{2 \cdot n(\text{Br}_2)^{\text{outlet}}}{n(\text{HBr})^{\text{inlet}}} \cdot 100, \% \quad \text{Eq. 2}$$

where $n(\text{Br}_2)^{\text{outlet}}$ and $n(\text{HBr})^{\text{inlet}}$ denote the respective molar flows of bromine and HBr at reactor outlet and inlet.

The reaction rate, *r*, expressed with respect to the reactant *i* (*i*: CH₄, CH₃Br, CH₂Br₂, or CO) was calculated using Eq. 3,

$$r = \frac{n(i)^{\text{inlet}} - n(i)^{\text{outlet}}}{W_{\text{cat}}}, \text{ mol}(i) \text{ s}^{-1} \text{ g}_{\text{cat}}^{-1} \quad \text{Eq. 3}$$

The selectivity to product *j*, *S*(*j*), and the yield of product *j*, *Y*(*j*), (*j*: CH₃Br, CH₂Br₂, CO, CO₂) were calculated using Eqs. 4 and 5, respectively,

$$S(j) = \frac{n(j)^{\text{outlet}}}{\sum n(j)^{\text{outlet}}} \cdot 100, \% \quad \text{Eq. 4}$$

$$Y(j) = \frac{X(i) \cdot S(j)}{100}, \% \quad \text{Eq. 5}$$

The error of the carbon mass balance, ε_C , determined using Eq. 6,

$$\varepsilon_C = \frac{\sum_{\text{inlet}} n(i)^{\text{inlet}} - \left(n(\text{CH}_4)^{\text{outlet}} + \sum_{\text{outlet}} n(j)^{\text{outlet}} \right)}{\sum_{\text{inlet}} n(i)^{\text{inlet}}} \cdot 100, \% \quad \text{Eq. 6}$$

was less than 5% in all experiments.

The absence of external heat and mass transfer limitations were confirmed by calculating Carberry number and the criteria given by Mears,^{43,44} respectively, while the internal mass transfer limitations can be discarded based on the experiments in which the particle size of the representative catalysts was varied (**Table S1**). The measurements of the bed temperature along its axial coordinate, showed the variation of ≤ 0.2 K.

After the tests, the reactor was quenched to room temperature in He flow and the catalyst was retrieved for characterization studies.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Characterization of fresh catalysts. To study the effect of dispersing ceria on the performance in methane oxybromination, the first task was to assess the impact of the carrier. For this purpose, supported catalysts containing equivalent amounts of CeO_2 (2 wt.%) were prepared by dry impregnation applying five representative supports (leading to samples coded CeO_2/S , where $S = \text{MgO}$, SiO_2 , SiC , Al_2O_3 , or ZrO_2). Analysis by X-ray diffraction (XRD) pointed towards differences in the dispersion of CeO_2 depending on the carrier applied (**Figure 1**). In particular, while broad weak reflections, characteristic of the presence of cubic CeO_2 nanocrystals with an estimated average size of *ca.* 4-9 nm (**Table 2**) were visible in

CeO₂/MgO, CeO₂/SiO₂, and CeO₂/SiC, they were absent in the diffractograms of CeO₂/Al₂O₃ and CeO₂/ZrO₂. Consistently, examination by high angle annular dark field scanning transmission electron microscopy (HAADF-STEM) coupled with elemental mapping confirmed the presence of CeO₂ nanoparticles decorating the surface of the MgO, SiO₂, and SiC carriers (**Figure 2**), contrasting the near atomic dispersion of the active phase on Al₂O₃ or ZrO₂. Subtle differences could be noted in the average size and morphology of the supported CeO₂ nanoparticles (**Table 2**), appearing bigger on MgO (*ca.* 6 nm) and SiC (*ca.* 9 nm) compared to SiO₂ (*ca.* 4 nm), which is likely related to the high surface area of the latter, and presenting a higher aspect ratio on MgO with respect to the spherical-like particles observed on SiO₂ and SiC (**Figure 3**, **Figure S2**). High-resolution transmission electron microscopy (HRTEM) revealed that the CeO₂ nanoparticles dominantly expose the {111} facets with a *d*-spacing of 0.31 nm, in line with their higher thermodynamic stability.^{19,33,34} In line with XRD and electron microscopy analysis, the Raman spectra of bulk CeO₂, CeO₂/MgO, CeO₂/SiO₂, and CeO₂/SiC (**Figure 4**) displayed a peak located at 461–464 cm⁻¹, which is ascribed to the F_{2g} mode of nanocrystalline fluorite structure of CeO₂.^{37,38,40,45} Contrastingly, the spectra of CeO₂/ZrO₂, which shows only the bands ascribed to the monoclinic ZrO₂ support, and CeO₂/Al₂O₃, which shows no Raman active bands in the spectral region of interest, are indicative of high ceria dispersion over these carriers and point to the possible formation of Ce_xZr_{1-x}O₂ and CeAlO₃ (*vide infra*).^{46,47} The latter compound is known to exhibit no active peaks in the investigated spectral range.⁴⁷ Bulk CeO₂ also exhibited a weak peak at 246 cm⁻¹, which is attributed to the second-order transverse acoustic mode (2TA).⁴⁵ In the case of CeO₂/SiO₂, a low-intensity peak at 604 cm⁻¹ is ascribed to a defect induced mode of CeO₂.^{37,45} This mode, which is normally Raman inactive, is correlated to the increased concentration of the oxygen vacancy defects and is often observed in silica

supported ceria catalysts.³⁷ The feature at 144 cm^{-1} in the spectrum of CeO_2/MgO is likely originating from MgO support, while the peak located at 512 cm^{-1} in the spectrum of CeO_2/SiC is related to Si-Si bonds in SiC.⁴⁸

To confirm the effect of dispersing the active phase on the electronic properties of ceria, the supported catalysts were analyzed by X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS, **Figure S3**). Both Ce^{3+} and Ce^{4+} species could be identified based on the satellite peaks observed around the $3d$ peaks of ceria.⁴⁹ Analysis of the relative composition of these species indicated that CeO_2/MgO and CeO_2/SiC contained predominantly Ce^{4+} ($>93\%\text{ Ce}^{4+}$, $<7\%\text{ Ce}^{3+}$) consistent with the distribution expected for CeO_2 (**Figure 5a**).⁴⁹ Comparatively, appreciable amounts of Ce^{3+} were observed for $\text{CeO}_2/\text{SiO}_2$ (*ca.* $33\%\text{ Ce}^{4+}$), and particularly $\text{CeO}_2/\text{ZrO}_2$ (*ca.* $45\%\text{ Ce}^{4+}$) and $\text{CeO}_2/\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ (*ca.* $52\%\text{ Ce}^{4+}$). Considering the high ceria dispersion observed in the latter materials, these results also suggest that a significant portion of cerium is likely present in the form of CeAlO_3 or $\text{Ce}_x\text{Zr}_{1-x}\text{O}_2$ solid solutions, respectively, due to the reaction with support,^{14,37,41,47} while the formation of CeO_2 -silica compounds might also be possible in the case of $\text{CeO}_2/\text{SiO}_2$.⁵⁰ In other words, the interaction of ceria with SiO_2 , and particularly Al_2O_3 and ZrO_2 support appears to be stronger compared to MgO and SiC. It is noteworthy that the CeO_2/SiC catalyst exhibited a strong O $1s$ signal (**Figure S3**), with a surface O:Si ratio of *ca.* 1.9, which is consistent with HRTEM observations (**Figure S2**) suggesting the formation of a silica-like structure at the surface of SiC.

Different molecules such as H_2 , CO, O_2 , or methane can be used to probe the reactivity of oxygen species in oxide-based catalysts by temperature-programmed reactions, which can be conducted in the form of transient (non-stationary) or steady state tests.^{27,33} The redox properties of the bulk and supported CeO_2 catalysts were here assessed using CO oxidation. This reaction is

expected to proceed *via* a Mars-van Krevelen mechanism, in which CO reacts with surface bound oxygens of ceria, and thus is sensitive to the structure and surface-related oxidation potential of the catalyst.^{27,33} The rates of CO oxidation at 753 K (**Figure 5b**), which were extracted from the representative light-off curves (**Figure S4**), decrease as follows: bulk CeO₂ >> CeO₂/ZrO₂ > CeO₂/MgO > CeO₂/SiC ~ CeO₂/Al₂O₃ > CeO₂/SiO₂, indicating that the oxidizing potential of the supported catalysts is significantly (*ca.* 2-40 times) reduced compared to bulk CeO₂. This could benefit the performance in MOB, since the strongly oxidizing character of bulk CeO₂ promotes combustion, resulting in a selectivity loss.²²⁻²⁴ The activity of the catalysts in CO oxidation were also compared based on the apparent activation energy (**Figure 5b**), which was calculated from the linear region of Arrhenius plots that corresponds to 5-40% of CO conversion (**Figure S4**). The values of this parameter were in the range of 40-100 kJ mol⁻¹ and increased in the following order: CeO₂/SiC < CeO₂ ~ CeO₂/ZrO₂ ~ CeO₂/MgO < CeO₂/Al₂O₃ < CeO₂/SiO₂, corroborating the previous observation that CO oxidation is particularly hampered over the fresh CeO₂/Al₂O₃ and CeO₂/SiO₂ catalysts.

3.2. Evaluation of catalysts in methane oxybromination. The bulk and supported CeO₂ catalysts were evaluated in MOB at three different temperatures (753, 773, and 793 K), using a stoichiometric ratio of reactants (CH₄:HBr:O₂ = 2:2:1) in the feed (**Figure 6**). The conversion of methane was in the range of 6-40%, which is comparable to those previously reported.^{19,22-24} MOB activity decreased in the following order: CeO₂/SiO₂ > CeO₂/SiC > CeO₂/ZrO₂ > bulk CeO₂ > CeO₂/MgO > CeO₂/Al₂O₃, wherein the most active CeO₂/SiO₂ catalyst displayed a 2-2.8 times higher activity compared to the least active CeO₂/Al₂O₃. Nevertheless, the rates over the other supported catalysts, *i.e.*, CeO₂/SiC,

CeO₂/ZrO₂, and CeO₂/MgO showed much smaller differences (5-30%) and were comparable to those over bulk CeO₂. Consistently, the apparent activation energies (**Figure S5**), which ranged from 80-156 kJ mol⁻¹, increased in a similar order: CeO₂/SiO₂ (80 kJ mol⁻¹) ~ CeO₂/ZrO₂ < CeO₂/SiC (100 kJ mol⁻¹) < CeO₂ (110 kJ mol⁻¹) < CeO₂/MgO (120 kJ mol⁻¹) < CeO₂/Al₂O₃ (156 kJ mol⁻¹).

As exemplified for several catalysts (**Figure 6**), the selectivity-conversion curves followed the same trend when the conversion was controlled by adjusting the reaction temperature or the space velocity. Supported CeO₂ systems displayed remarkable differences in product distribution compared to bulk CeO₂. Significantly enhanced selectivity to CH₃Br was observed over CeO₂/MgO (61-81%), CeO₂/SiC (56-73%), and CeO₂/SiO₂ (52-71%) compared to CeO₂/ZrO₂, which was similar to bulk CeO₂ (*ca.* 40%), while the lowest selectivity to this product was obtained over CeO₂/Al₂O₃ (28-35%). This could be linked to the selectivity to CO_x, which increased in the opposite order: CeO₂/MgO (6-11%) < CeO₂/SiC (9-21%) < CeO₂/SiO₂ (17-34%) < CeO₂/ZrO₂ (*ca.* 50%) ~ bulk CeO₂ < CeO₂/Al₂O₃ (30-65%). The most prominent byproduct over the best-performing CeO₂/MgO catalyst was CH₂Br₂, which although less valued than CH₃Br, could be further valorized in bromine-mediated natural gas upgrading *via* reproporation or hydrodebromination.^{9,10,25} The yield of CH₃Br (≤18.7%), as well as the combined yield of CH₃Br and CH₂Br₂ (≤25.9%) are among the highest reported in the literature.^{19,22-24} To confirm the catalyst stability, the activity of CeO₂/MgO was evaluated under more demanding conditions of moderate conversion and decreased oxygen content in the feed (**Figure 7**). Remarkably, the performance of this catalyst was stable over 80 h on stream.

3.3. Characterization of the used catalysts. The structure, porosity, and electronic properties of the oxyhalogenation catalysts can be altered under reaction conditions. To determine the impact of the reaction environment on these properties, the bulk and supported CeO₂ catalysts were characterized after equilibration in MOB at 773 K over 5 h. The specific surface areas and pore volumes of the supported catalysts were essentially unaltered after this test, confirming the stability of the respective carriers, while bulk CeO₂ experienced *ca.* 20% decrease (**Table 2**). The XRD patterns of the equilibrated catalysts resembled those of the respective fresh materials (**Figure 1**), demonstrating the absence of structural alterations, such as the formation of bromide phases, which is consistent with the previously reported stability of CeO₂ in this reaction.^{19,23} The HAADF-STEM micrographs of CeO₂/MgO catalyst evidenced an increased prevalence of rod-like CeO₂ nanoparticles (length: 5-12 nm, width: 2-3 nm) along the edges of MgO particles, although the average particle size assuming a spherical geometry was unaltered (6 nm) (**Figure 2f**, **Table 2**). Comparatively, the size of CeO₂ nanoparticles in the equilibrated CeO₂/SiO₂ (**Figure 2g**) and CeO₂/SiC (**Figure 2h**) matched those of the respective fresh catalysts (**Table 2**). HRTEM analysis of CeO₂/MgO (**Figure 3b**) and CeO₂/SiO₂ (**Figure 3d**) demonstrated that the {111} type facets remain predominant, although {200} facets (with a *d*-spacing of 0.27 nm) were also observable (**Figure S2**).^{19,33,34} HAADF-STEM micrographs and elemental maps indicated that the dispersion of ceria in equilibrated CeO₂/ZrO₂ (**Figure 2i**) and CeO₂/Al₂O₃ (**Figure 2j**) remained close to atomic. Consistently, the Raman spectra of the equilibrated catalysts (**Figure 4**) displayed no significant differences compared to the fresh samples. The only exception was CeO₂/SiC, wherein the peak at 512 cm⁻¹ ascribed to Si-Si bond in SiC support vanished upon its exposure to the oxybromination, likely due to carrier oxidation into SiO₂. Elemental maps also suggest that a higher amount of bromine was taken up by the

CeO₂/MgO and CeO₂/Al₂O₃ catalysts compared to the other materials (**Figure 2**). This was substantiated by the increased Br:Ce ratio evidenced by XPS in the surface of the equilibrated catalysts, which followed the trend: CeO₂/MgO > CeO₂/Al₂O₃ > CeO₂/ZrO₂ > CeO₂/SiO₂ > CeO₂/SiC (**Figure 5a**). Analysis of the Ce 3d core level spectra of equilibrated CeO₂/MgO, CeO₂/SiC, CeO₂/ZrO₂, and CeO₂/SiC revealed a slightly lower fraction of Ce⁴⁺ compared to the fresh catalysts, suggesting a partial reduction of ceria (**Figure 5a**, **Figure S3**). In contrast, an increased fraction of Ce⁴⁺ was observed for CeO₂/SiO₂. Since the bromination of CeO₂ is expected to induce reduction, *i.e.*, a decrease in the fraction of Ce⁴⁺ state,²⁴ the increased bromine content of CeO₂/MgO is likely related to the bromination of the carrier, which could be expected due to its strong basic character. This was supported by the good correlation between the bromine and magnesium signals in the elemental maps (**Figure 2f**). Still, the surface Br:Mg ratio of *ca.* 0.03 determined from XPS was well below that expected for MgBr₂, indicating that the bromination of MgO is partial and/or constrained to the outer most layers of the carrier. Another interesting feature was the change of the redox properties of the catalysts after use in MOB, as evidenced by the change in CO oxidation rates compared to the fresh catalysts (**Figure 5b**, **Figure S4**). The equilibration of CeO₂/Al₂O₃, CeO₂/ZrO₂, CeO₂/SiC, and CeO₂/SiO₂ led to an increase in their CO oxidation activity, which was particularly pronounced for the latter two materials. It is hypothesized that MOB induced decomposition of ceria-silica compounds that could be present in the fresh CeO₂/SiC and CeO₂/SiO₂ catalysts, yielding smaller ceria crystallites, which are more active in oxidation.^{36,50} This may also explain the noticeable increase in the Ce⁴⁺ fraction in the equilibrated CeO₂/SiO₂ catalyst (**Figure 5a**). In contrast, CeO₂/MgO showed similar behavior to bulk CeO₂, both catalysts exhibiting a lower rate and higher apparent activation energy with

respect to the fresh materials. The decreased oxidizing potential of CeO₂/MgO could be related to the growth of the rod-like CeO₂ nanoparticles, which exhibited a slightly increased size compared to those present in the fresh catalyst. Nevertheless, these structural changes appear to be of a much lower magnitude compared to the more than 50% decrease in the CO oxidation rate. It seems more plausible that the reduction of the oxidizing propensity of the equilibrated CeO₂/MgO is related to its bromination, which as discussed above primarily occurs on the support. It might also be possible that CeO₂ nanoparticles are doped or decorated with MgO, which after being brominated reduces their ability to oxidize CO as well as bromomethanes.

3.4. Optimization of MgO-supported CeO₂ catalysts. Given the remarkable performance of CeO₂/MgO catalyst in MOB, this system was chosen to evaluate the role of morphology of supported CeO₂ phase on its activity and product distribution. In this regard, the loading of CeO₂ and the synthesis method were adjusted to tailor the geometry of CeO₂ nanoparticles, and hence to determine their impact on the MOB performance. As the CeO₂/MgO catalyst exhibited an activity comparable to that of bulk CeO₂ (**Figure 6**), the effect of reducing the CeO₂ loading to 0.5 and 0.1 wt.% (*i.e.*, CeO₂/MgO-0.5 and CeO₂-MgO-0.1) and the contribution of the bare MgO carrier were evaluated in MOB (**Figure 8**, left). Decreasing the content of the active phase led to the expected reduction in the rate of MOB. Nevertheless, the activity of CeO₂/MgO-0.5 was only *ca.* 10% lower compared to that of CeO₂/MgO, while the product distribution was essentially unaffected. Inspection of the equilibrated CeO₂/MgO-0.5 catalyst revealed a similar size (*ca.* 6 nm), shape, and faceting of CeO₂ nanoparticles as observed in CeO₂/MgO (**Figure 9a**, **Figure S6**, **Table 2**), although no rod-like nanostructures could be observed. In the case of CeO₂/MgO-0.1, the particles of CeO₂ could not be clearly distinguished (**Figure S7**). Its activity was significantly lower and selectivity to CO_x enhanced, and was in this regard more similar to

the bare MgO. Although the latter carrier exhibited a relatively high selectivity to CH₃Br, it led to a more pronounced CO_x production compared to CeO₂/MgO. Besides, activity of MgO and the yield of bromomethanes over this material are ca. 4-5 times lower compared to CeO₂/MgO, which preserves the high selectivity to bromomethanes and low selectivity to CO_x at significantly higher conversions. This result indicates that CeO₂ is primarily responsible for the activity of the supported catalysts.

To confirm the impact of the particle size on the performance of CeO₂ nanoparticles supported on MgO, catalysts with a CeO₂ loading of 0.5 wt.% were calcined at three different temperatures (973, 1173, and 1373 K). The resulting samples (*i.e.*, CeO₂/MgO-0.5-973, CeO₂/MgO-0.5-1173, and CeO₂/MgO-0.5-1373) displayed comparable surface areas (**Table 2**), while the average size of CeO₂ nanoparticles increased from *ca.* 6 to 15 nm with increasing calcination temperature (**Figure S7, Table 2**). The rate of MOB decreased with increasing the particle size (**Figure 8, middle**). Nevertheless, the selectivity-conversion patterns for these catalysts followed an almost identical trend as the one observed for CeO₂/MgO catalyst, suggesting the absence of a noticeable particle size effect on the product distribution in MOB over this catalytic system.

Besides, to further probe the impact of the particle geometry and their interaction with the support on MOB, supported CeO₂ catalysts (2 wt.%) were prepared by coprecipitation, mechanochemical, and hydrothermal synthesis (*i.e.*, CeO₂/MgO-c, CeO₂/MgO-m, and CeO₂/MgO-h, respectively). The average size of the CeO₂ nanoparticles in these materials was similar to or slightly larger than that of CeO₂/MgO (**Figure 9, Table 2**). In the equilibrated CeO₂/MgO-c catalyst {111} fringes were prevalent, although the particles also exposed {200} facets, while CeO₂/MgO-h displayed CeO₂ nanocubes dominated by {200} facets. CeO₂/MgO-c exhibited the highest reaction rate (**Figure 8, right**), exceeding that of the reference CeO₂/MgO

catalysts (**Figure 8**, left), at almost similar selectivity to bromomethanes. The activity and selectivity profiles of CeO₂/MgO-h and CeO₂/MgO-m catalysts were analogous to those of CeO₂/MgO. Overall, these results indicate that CeO₂ nanostructure has a minor effect on the product distribution over MgO supported CeO₂ catalysts. This contradicts previous findings of He *et al.* who reported the structure sensitive performance of CeO₂ in MOB based on the study of well-defined nanocrystals of CeO₂, wherein the nanocubes, *i.e.*, {200} facets were found the most active and selective.¹⁹ However, it has to be noted that the differences in product distribution and particularly the reaction rates between the different CeO₂ nanoparticles observed by these authors were not so strongly pronounced (*ca.* ±10%).

Consistently, the CO oxidation activity of the various MgO-supported CeO₂ catalysts was almost identical after their equilibration in MOB, and substantially lower compared to that of the fresh catalysts, for which significant differences in the redox properties could be observed (**Figure 10**, **Figure S8**). This result indicates that the different MgO supported catalysts possess a very similar oxidizing potential under MOB environment, likely caused by the catalyst bromination, which ultimately result in the very similar product distribution.

3.5. Rationalization of the product distribution. Our previous studies on MOB over bulk catalytic systems suggested that the formation of C-Br bonds might involve the gas-phase reaction of methane with bromine that is generated by the HBr oxidation on the catalysts (**Figure 11**).²²⁻²⁴ Several kinetic fingerprints, such as *i*) the occurrence of MOB in the temperature window (≥753 K) which coincides with that of the non-catalyzed gas-phase bromination, *ii*) comparable MOB rates over bulk and supported CeO₂ catalyst in spite of their markedly different redox properties, *iii*) selectivity to CH₃Br and CH₂Br₂ over the best performing CeO₂/MgO catalyst which is similar to those in the gas-phase bromination, and

iv) the absence of the sensitivity of the product distribution on the size and faceting of CeO₂ nanoparticles (**Figure 8**) give strong hints that this mechanism might also operate in the case of supported CeO₂ catalysts. To shed a light on the origin of MOB activity, the equilibrated bulk and supported CeO₂ catalysts were also evaluated in methane and HBr oxidation (**Figure 12a**, **Figure S9**), which were applied as the probe reactions to access the catalyst ability to activate these reactants. Herein, the rates of methane oxidation over bulk CeO₂ and CeO₂/ZrO₂ catalyst were *ca.* 2-3 times lower compared to those of MOB (**Figure S9**), implying that there could be a catalytic contribution in the latter reaction. This result also correlates with the strong oxidizing potential of the latter catalysts (**Figure 5b**). Nevertheless, a catalytic activation of methane over these materials is likely contributing to a pronounced CO_x evolution in MOB (**Figure 6**). Contrastingly, the rates of CH₄ oxidation over CeO₂/MgO, CeO₂/SiO₂, CeO₂/SiC, and CeO₂/Al₂O₃ were *ca.* 5-10 times lower compared to those in MOB (**Figure S9**), suggesting that methane activation over these catalysts is substantially impeded. In fact, this set of catalysts displayed a great selectivity enhancement in MOB, with the exception of CeO₂/Al₂O₃ (**Figure 6**). On the other hand, the rates of HBr oxidation were >8 times higher compared to those of MOB (**Figure 12a**, **Figure S9**), indicating the facile evolution of bromine, which may enter the gas-phase bromination reaction (**Figure 11**). The feasibility of the mechanism comprising heterogeneous HBr oxidation and gas-phase bromination of methane was also probed by studying the reaction kinetics over the most selective CeO₂/MgO catalyst in more detail (**Figure S11**). The apparent reaction order with respect to methane of *ca.* 1 (**Figure S11**) displayed by this catalyst was close to that observed in methane bromination (*ca.* 1).⁵¹ The order with respect to HBr of *ca.* 0.2 (**Figure S11**), which might appear in contrast to the known inhibition effect of this reactant on the gas-phase bromination,⁵¹ can be explained by the

continuous oxidation of HBr into Br₂, to which the gas-phase bromination exhibits a positive reaction order (*ca.* 0.5).

In the above proposed mechanism the principal role of a catalyst is to oxidize HBr into molecular bromine and to suppress a loss of selectivity to bromomethanes by suppressing the combustion reactions (**Figure 11**). The propensity of CeO₂ catalysts supported over different carriers to evolve CO_x in MOB (**Figure 6**) generally agreed with the order of catalysts activity in CO oxidation after the equilibration (**Figure 5b**). In agreement with our previous findings on bulk systems,^{21,22} this result indicates that the product distribution is primarily determined by the redox properties of the catalyst (**Figure 11**). The exception to this rule was the CeO₂/Al₂O₃ catalyst, which although exhibiting a slightly higher CO oxidation activity compared to the best performing CeO₂/MgO catalyst (**Figure 5b**), displayed the lowest selectivity to bromocarbons in oxybromination. A possible explanation for this exceptional behavior, might be the activity of the carrier in the undesired combustion reactions, comprising the oxidation of methane or bromomethanes (CH₃Br and CH₂Br₂).

To assess the carrier contribution to the product distribution over supported catalysts, CeO₂/MgO, CeO₂/Al₂O₃ and respective catalyst carriers MgO and Al₂O₃ were hence evaluated in methane and bromomethane oxidation under conditions closely matching those of MOB. In both cases, the rate of methane oxidation was negligible compared to the rate of bromomethanes oxidation (**Figure 12b**). Moreover, the activity of bulk and other supported CeO₂ catalysts in methane oxidation is *ca.* 2-8 times lower than the rate of methane oxidation. (**Figure S10**), while the rate of CH₂Br₂ oxidation is similar to or higher than the rate of oxybromination (**Figure 12a**). This indicates that a consecutive oxidation of bromomethanes has much higher impact on the formation of CO_x than the oxidation of methane. Still, in the case of bulk CeO₂ and CeO₂/ZrO₂

catalysts, the contribution of methane oxidation is likely higher compared to other materials. In agreement with the product distribution observed in oxybromination, MgO and CeO₂/MgO exhibited substantially lower activity for bromomethanes oxidation compared to Al₂O₃ and CeO₂/Al₂O₃. Notably, the rate of CH₂Br₂ oxidation over Al₂O₃ was rather high and comprised *ca.* 85% of the activity of CeO₂/Al₂O₃ catalyst in this reaction, in line with previous reports of the high activity of this carrier in the oxidation of halocarbons.^{52,53} The latter involves halogen displacement by hydroxyl groups, whereby the eliminated hydrogen halides are prone to react with Lewis acidic aluminum atoms. This mechanism is consistent with our observations that CO is the main product in MOB, CH₃Br and CH₂Br₂ oxidation over both the CeO₂/Al₂O₃ catalyst and Al₂O₃ carrier, and with the increased surface Br:Ce ratio in the equilibrated CeO₂/Al₂O₃ catalyst (**Figure 5a**). Hence, a low selectivity to bromomethanes observed over CeO₂/Al₂O₃ catalyst is primarily caused by their combustion over the carrier (**Figure 11**).

Based on these results, CH₂Br₂ oxidation was chosen as a model reaction to assess the propensity of the other supported catalysts and carriers to combustion. Herein, ZrO₂ was also found to exhibit a relatively high activity (equivalent to *ca.* 20% of that of CeO₂/ZrO₂), which is in analogy to the Al₂O₃ carrier likely caused by the presence of basic OH groups and Lewis acidic zirconium ions.⁵⁴ In contrast, MgO, SiO₂, and SiC can be considered inert in CH₂Br₂ oxidation (**Figure 12c**). Nevertheless, CeO₂/SiO₂ and CeO₂/SiC catalysts were more active in combusting CH₂Br₂ than CeO₂/MgO, indicating that most CO_x formation (*ca.* 70-90%) over the former catalysts results from the enhanced oxidizing potential of the active phase (**Figure 5b**). Finally, a comparison of MOB, CH₄, CH₂Br₂, and HBr oxidation rates (**Figure 12a**), shows that CeO₂/MgO exhibits the lowest activity in CH₂Br₂ oxidation, while preserving relatively high activity in HBr oxidation and MOB, in good correspondence to the highest selectivity to

bromocarbons observed over this catalysts (**Figure 6**). **Figure 12a** also demonstrates that catalyst must exhibit certain threshold activity in HBr oxidation in order to be sufficiently active in methane oxybromination. The clear example for this is $\text{CeO}_2/\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ catalyst, which shows the lowest rate of HBr oxidation (**Figure 12a**) and is consequentially the least active in oxybromination (**Figure 6**). On the other hand, the high activity in HBr oxidation (*e.g.*, bulk CeO_2 and $\text{CeO}_2/\text{ZrO}_2$) is correlated with the enhanced oxidation of bromomethanes. Therefore, a high oxybromination performance requires the balanced oxidizing potential, which is best-matched by CeO_2/MgO catalyst.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Supported CeO_2 catalysts were investigated in methane oxybromination, revealing major differences in performance compared to the bulk material, especially in the product distribution. The latter was strongly dependent on the type of carrier, which both influenced the dispersion, structure, and redox properties of the active phase, and exhibited a variable degree of inertness with respect to the oxidation of bromomethanes. Supported CeO_2 catalysts displayed decreased oxidizing potential compared to the bulk phase, which was associated with an enhanced selectivity due to a reduced activity in side combustion reactions (**Figure 11**). This effect was least pronounced over $\text{CeO}_2/\text{ZrO}_2$, which exhibited similar performance to bulk CeO_2 . Another influential factor was the carrier propensity to combust bromomethanes. The latter reactions were more pronounced over the ZrO_2 and particularly the Al_2O_3 supports, which was related to the presence of Lewis acidic metal ions and basic hydroxyl groups, and resulted selectivity losses over the respective supported catalysts (**Figure 11**). An optimal balance of redox properties and carrier inertness was observed over CeO_2/MgO catalyst (**Figure 11**), stabilizing CeO_2 in the form

of nanoparticles (*ca.* 9 nm). This catalytic system provided the highest selectivity to CH₃Br (61-81%), which substantially exceeded that of bulk CeO₂ (~ 40%) and rivalled those of the best previously reported oxybromination catalysts. Besides, the selectivity to CO_x (6-10%) was drastically reduced and its performance was stable for over 80 h on stream. Importantly, the product distribution over the MgO-supported catalysts was almost unaffected by the changes in the loading, size, and faceting of CeO₂ nanoparticles, which was in agreement with the similar oxidation potentials observed after equilibration of the latter catalysts, hinting at the adoption of a common surface structure. The findings are consistent with the mechanism comprising heterogeneous HBr oxidation into bromine, followed by the reaction of the latter with methane in the gas-phase. Thereby, supporting CeO₂ over suitable carriers provides an effective strategy to tailor its redox properties, and particularly the propensity to combustion, which is relevant in view of developing technical form catalyst for practical implementation of this technology.

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information. Supplementary information associated with this article, containing a scheme of reactor set-up, additional catalytic and characterization data, can be found in the online version.

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Author Contributions

The manuscript was written through contributions of all authors. All authors have given approval to the final version of the manuscript.

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Table 1. Conditions applied in the reactions studied.

Reaction	$W_{\text{cat}} /$ g	$F_{\text{T}} /$ $\text{cm}^3 \text{ min}^{-1}$	Feed composition ^a / mol.%					
			CH ₄	HBr	CO	CH ₃ Br	CH ₂ Br ₂	O ₂
CH ₄ oxybromination	1.0	100-200	3-20	3-12	0	0	3	1.5-6
CH ₄ oxidation	1.0	100	6	0	0	0	3	3
CH ₃ Br oxidation	0.2	100	0	0	0	1	0	2
CH ₂ Br ₂ oxidation	0.2	100	0	0	0	0	1	2
CO oxidation	0.2	100	6	0	1.5	0	0	3
HBr oxidation	0.5	100	0	6	0	0	0	3

^a Ar (4.5 mol.%) was added as an internal standard to all the reaction mixtures, except for HBr oxidation. He was used as the balance gas.

Table 2. Characterization data of the samples.

Catalyst	CeO ₂ nominal / wt.%	CeO ₂ bulk ^a / wt.%		CeO ₂ crystallite size ^b / nm		CeO ₂ crystallite size ^c / nm		support	$S_{\text{BET}}^{\text{d}}$ / m ² g ⁻¹		support	$V_{\text{pore}}^{\text{e}}$ / cm ³ g ⁻¹	
	fresh	used	fresh	used	fresh	used	fresh		used	fresh		used	
CeO ₂	100	-	-	20	21	-	-	-	49	38		0.13	0.11
CeO ₂ /ZrO ₂	2	2.1	2.1	-	-	-	-	41	41	41	0.27	0.07	0.06
CeO ₂ /Al ₂ O ₃	2	2.0	2.0	-	-	-	-	143	143	146	0.51	0.51	0.50
CeO ₂ /SiC	2	2.0	2.0	9	9	9	9	36	38	36	0.10	0.29	0.28
CeO ₂ /SiO ₂	2	1.9	1.9	5	5	4	3	241	246	246	1.90	1.25	1.23
CeO ₂ /MgO	2	2.0	2.0	9	9	6	6	29	27	27	0.22	0.19	0.21
CeO ₂ /MgO-0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5	-	-	6	6	29	48	30	0.22	0.19	0.19
CeO ₂ /MgO-0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	-	-	-	-	29	37	26	0.22	0.21	0.19
CeO ₂ /MgO-0.5-973	0.5	0.6	0.6	6	7	6	6	28	24	22	0.14	0.14	0.15
CeO ₂ /MgO-0.5-1173	0.5	0.6	0.6	10	10	-	-	28	24	21	0.14	0.12	0.15
CeO ₂ /MgO-0.5-1373	0.5	0.5	0.5	16	16	-	18	28	22	18	0.14	0.20	0.15
CeO ₂ /MgO-m	2	2.0	1.9	7	7	-	-	29	32	25	29	0.20	0.19
CeO ₂ /MgO-c	2	2.1	1.9	7	7	-	9	-	48	29	-	0.16	0.14
CeO ₂ /MgO-h	2	1.9	2.4	16	16	-	10	29	50	32	29	0.20	0.14

^a ICP-OES. ^b Scherrer equation. ^c STEM. ^d BET model. ^e Volume of N₂ adsorbed at $p/p_0 = 0.98$.

Figure 1. XRD patterns of bulk and supported CeO₂ catalysts in fresh form (blue) and after equilibration in methane oxybromination (red). Reference patterns are shown as vertical lines below the measured diffractograms and are identified with their ICDD-PDF numbers. The insets

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show magnification of the 2θ regions where the main CeO_2 reflections are expected.

Equilibration conditions: $\text{CH}_4\text{:HBr:O}_2\text{:Ar:He} = 6\text{:}6\text{:}3\text{:}4.5\text{:}80.5$, $F_{\text{T}}/W_{\text{cat}} = 100 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ min}^{-1} \text{ g}_{\text{cat}}^{-1}$,

$T = 773 \text{ K}$, $P = 1 \text{ bar}$, $t_{\text{os}} = 5 \text{ h}$.

Figure 2. HAADF-STEM micrographs and corresponding elemental maps of (a,f) CeO₂/MgO, (b,g) CeO₂/SiO₂, (c,h) CeO₂/SiC, (d,i) CeO₂/ZrO₂, and (e,j) CeO₂/Al₂O₃ catalysts in fresh form (a-e) and after equilibration in methane oxybromination (f-j). Equilibration conditions as reported in the caption of **Figure 1**.

Figure 3. HRTEM micrographs of (a,b) CeO₂/MgO and (c,d) CeO₂/SiO₂ catalysts in fresh form (a,c) and after equilibration in methane oxybromination (b,d). The insets show the fast Fourier transform of the boxed regions. Equilibration conditions as reported in the caption of **Figure 1**.

Figure 4. Raman spectra of bulk and supported CeO₂ catalysts in fresh form (blue) and after equilibration in methane oxybromination (red). Equilibration conditions as reported in the caption of **Figure 1**.

Figure 5. (a) The fraction of Ce⁴⁺ versus the Br:Ce atomic ratio determined by XPS, and (b) a comparison of the apparent activation energy, $E_{a,app}$, and the rate of CO oxidation at 753 K, $r@753\text{ K}$, for the bulk and supported CeO₂ catalysts in fresh form (open symbols) and after equilibration in methane oxybromination (solid symbols). Equilibration conditions as reported in the caption of **Figure 1**. Conditions in CO oxidation: CO:O₂:Ar:He = 1.5:3:4.5:91, $F_T/W_{cat} = 500\text{ cm}^3\text{ min}^{-1}\text{ g}_{cat}^{-1}$, $P = 1\text{ bar}$.

Figure 6. Selectivity to CH_3Br (top), CH_2Br_2 (middle), and CO_x (bottom) *versus* the conversion in methane oxybromination over bulk and supported CeO_2 catalysts at various temperatures (solid symbols, $F_{\text{T}}/W_{\text{cat}} = 100 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ min}^{-1} \text{ g}_{\text{cat}}^{-1}$) and space velocities ($T = 773 \text{ K}$, open symbols). The dashed gray lines indicate the yields of respective products. Conditions: $\text{CH}_4:\text{HBr}:\text{O}_2:\text{Ar}:\text{He} = 6:6:3:4.5:80.5$, $P = 1 \text{ bar}$.

Figure 7. Conversion and product selectivity *versus* time-on-stream, in methane oxybromination over CeO_2/MgO catalyst. Conditions: $\text{CH}_4:\text{HBr}:\text{O}_2:\text{Ar}:\text{He} = 6:6:2:4.5:81.5$, $F_{\text{T}}/W_{\text{cat}} = 100 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ min}^{-1} \text{ g}_{\text{cat}}^{-1}$, $T = 773 \text{ K}$, $P = 1 \text{ bar}$.

Figure 8. Selectivity to CH_3Br (top), CH_2Br_2 (middle), and CO_x (bottom) *versus* the conversion in methane oxybromination over MgO-supported CeO_2 catalysts prepared using different loading (left), calcination temperature (middle), and synthesis method (right) at various temperatures. The dashed gray lines indicate the yields of respective products. Conditions: $\text{CH}_4:\text{HBr}:\text{O}_2:\text{Ar}:\text{He} = 6:6:3:4.5:80.5$, $F_T/W_{\text{cat}} = 100 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ min}^{-1} \text{ g}_{\text{cat}}^{-1}$, $P = 1 \text{ bar}$.

Figure 9. HRTEM micrographs of (a) CeO₂/MgO-0.5, (b) CeO₂/MgO-c, and (c) CeO₂/MgO-h catalysts equilibrated under methane oxybromination. The insets show the fast Fourier transform of the boxed regions. Equilibration conditions as reported in the caption of **Figure 1**.

Figure 10. A comparison of the apparent activation energy and the rate of CO oxidation at 753 K for MgO-supported CeO_2 catalysts in fresh form (open symbols) and after equilibration in methane oxybromination (solid symbols). Conditions: $\text{CO}:\text{O}_2:\text{Ar}:\text{He} = 1.5:3:4.5:91$, $F_{\text{T}}/W_{\text{cat}} = 500 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ min}^{-1} \text{ g}_{\text{cat}}^{-1}$, $P = 1 \text{ bar}$. Equilibration conditions as reported in the caption of **Figure 1**.

Figure 11. Criteria for the design of supported CeO_2 catalyst for methane oxybromination and schematic representation of key parts of the reaction scheme.

Figure 12. (a) Rates of methane oxybromination, methane and CH_2Br_2 oxidation *versus* the rate of HBr oxidation at 753 K over the bulk and supported CeO_2 catalysts. (b) Rates of methane, CH_3Br , and CH_2Br_2 oxidation at 753 K over the bare MgO and Al_2O_3 supports and the supported

CeO₂/MgO and CeO₂/Al₂O₃ catalysts. (c) Rate of CH₂Br₂ oxidation over the supported CeO₂ catalysts *versus* the rate of CH₂Br₂ oxidation over respective bare supports after equilibration in methane oxybromination. The oxidation of CH₃Br (CH₃Br:O₂:Ar:He = 1:2:4.5:92.5) and CH₂Br₂ (CH₂Br₂:O₂:Ar:He = 1:2:4.5:92.5) were performed at $F_T/W_{\text{cat}} = 500 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ min}^{-1} \text{ g}_{\text{cat}}^{-1}$, and the oxidation of HBr (HBr:O₂:He = 6:3:91) and methane (CH₄:O₂:Ar:He = 6:3:4.5:86.5) were studied at $F_T/W_{\text{cat}} = 200 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ min}^{-1} \text{ g}_{\text{cat}}^{-1}$ and $F_T/W_{\text{cat}} = 100 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ min}^{-1} \text{ g}_{\text{cat}}^{-1}$, respectively. Methane oxybromination was performed under the conditions reported in the caption of **Figure 6**. All tests were conducted at $P = 1 \text{ bar}$.

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