

PAPER

[View Article Online](#)
[View Journal](#) | [View Issue](#)Cite this: *Dalton Trans.*, 2022, **51**, 7889

Synthesis, structure and reactivity with phosphines of Hg(II) *ortho*-cyano-aminothiophenolate complexes formed *via* C–S bond cleavage and dehydrogenation of 2-aminobenzothiazoles†

Subhi A. Al-Jibori,^{a*} Ahmed A. Irzogi,^b Ahmed S. M. Al-Janabi,^c Amenah I. A. Al-Nassiry,^b Sucharita Basak-Modi,^d Shishir Ghosh,^d Christoph Wagner^e and Graeme Hogarth^f

Addition of 2-aminobenzothiazole (abt) and substituted derivatives to Hg(OAc)₂ leads to the high yield formation of *ortho*-cyano-aminothiophenolate (ocap) complexes [Hg(SC₆H₃XN(C≡N))]_n (X = H, Me, Cl, Br, NO₂) resulting from dehydrogenation and C–S bond cleavage. The reaction appears to be unique to Hg(OAc)₂ and with HgCl₂ the product [HgCl₂(abt)]_n contains an intact abt ligand, but reacts with acetate to afford the ocap complex [Hg(SC₆H₄N(C≡N))]_n. Binding of abt to Hg(II) has previously been probed in molecular structures of [Hg(sac)₂(abt)L] (L = MeOH, DMSO) and these have been reexamined to understand the perturbation of abt upon coordination. When the reaction of abt and Hg(OAc)₂ was carried out at low temperatures the intermediate [Hg(κ²-OAc)(EtOH)(μ-HNCN(C≡N)SC₆H₄)]₂ was isolated resulting from a single ligand deprotonation thus allowing a mechanism for ring-opening to be proposed. Reactions of [Hg(SC₆H₃XN(C≡N))]_n with mono- and bidentate phosphines have been studied, affording a series of complexes in which the ocap ligands adopt four different binding modes in the solid state, as shown by a number of crystallographic studies. In all, the ligand chelates to a single mercury centre but spans to the second *via* either: (i) a simple S,N-chelate, (ii) coordination through nitrogen of the C≡N group, (iii) the sulfur acting as a thiolate-bridge, (iv) both thiolate bridging and cyanide coordination. With PPh₃ two different binding modes are seen in complexes [Hg(SC₆H₃XN(C≡N))(PPh₃)]₂ being dependant upon the nature of the arene-substituent, while addition of excess PPh₃ affords mononuclear [Hg(SC₆H₃XN(C≡N))(PPh₃)₂]. With dppm, binuclear [Hg(SC₆H₃XN(C≡N))(κ¹-dppm)]₂ result in which the diphosphine binds in a monodentate fashion. With the more flexible diphosphines, dppe and dppb, coordination polymers [Hg(SC₆H₃XN(C≡N))(κ¹,κ¹-diphosphine)]_n result in which ocap binds in a simple chelate fashion. Somewhat unexpectedly, with dppp, binuclear complexes [Hg₂(SC₆H₃XN(C≡N))₂(μ,κ¹,κ¹-dppp)] result in which two diphosphines bridge the Hg₂ centre, while with dpfp mononuclear chelates are proposed to result. Thus, the simple and high-yielding ring-opening of 2-aminobenzothiazole and substituted derivatives by mercuric acetate provides ready access to a range of novel *ortho*-cyano-aminothiophenolate complexes, being shown to be a highly versatile ligand that can adopt a number of different coordination modes.

Received 8th February 2022,
Accepted 21st April 2022

DOI: 10.1039/d2dt00391k

rsc.li/dalton^aDepartment of Chemistry, College of Science, University of Tikrit, Tikrit, Iraq^bDepartment of Chemistry, College of Education, University of Tikrit, Tikrit, Iraq^cDepartment of Biochemistry, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Tikrit, Tikrit, Iraq^dDepartment of Chemistry, University College London, 20 Gordon Street, London, WC1H 0AJ, UK^eInstitute für Chemie, Martin-Luther-Universität, Halle-Wittenberg, Kurt-Mothes-Str.2, D-06120 Halle, Germany^fDepartment of Chemistry, King's College London, Britannia House, 7 Trinity Street, London, SE1 1DB, UK†Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: All experimental methods and characterising data, along with details of the X-ray crystallographic structure determinations. CCDC 2097812–2097815 and 2112641. For ESI and crystallographic data in CIF or other electronic format see DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1039/d2dt00391k>

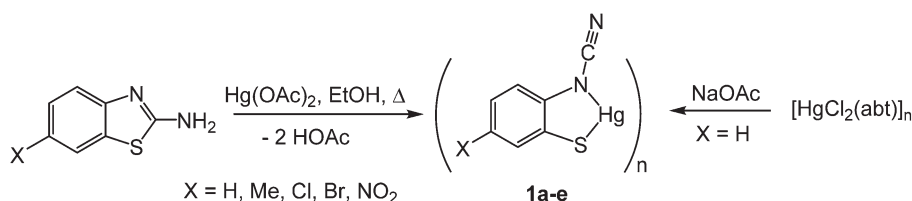
2. Results and discussion

(i) Ring-opening of 2-aminobenzothiazoles (abt) upon reaction with $\text{Hg}(\text{OAc})_2$: synthesis of *ortho*-cyano-aminothiophenolate (ocap) complexes $[\text{Hg}\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_3\text{XN}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}]_n$ (1a–e)

We have been unable to crystallographically characterise these species and thus unambiguously assign the ocap coordination mode, although based on the different binding modes seen in phosphine adducts (**A–C** Chart 2 see later) we speculate that they most likely act as a tetra-coordinating ligand (**D**) binding through both nitrogen atoms and with a bridging sulfur, giving rise to a coordination polymer.

(ii) Probing the mechanism of the ring-opening reaction: characterisation of intermediate $[\text{Hg}(\kappa^2\text{-OAc})(\text{EtOH})(\mu\text{-HNCNC}_6\text{H}_4)]_2$ (3)

The reaction appears to be limited to $\text{Hg}(\text{OAc})_2$, since other mercury salts give simple adducts in which abt is bound through the endocyclic nitrogen.⁹ For example, we recently crystallographically characterised $[\text{Hg}(\text{sac})_2(\text{abt})\text{L}]$ (**2a–b**) ($\text{L} = \text{MeOH}, \text{DMSO}$) (Chart 3) formed upon addition of two equivalents of sodium saccharinate (Nasac) to $[\text{HgCl}_2(\text{abt})]_n$.¹⁰ Chart 3 gives a comparison of important bond lengths within these two closely related molecules. Consideration of the C–N



Scheme 1 Synthesis of ocap complexes **1a–e** via ring-opening of abt upon reaction with $\text{Hg}(\text{OAc})_2$.

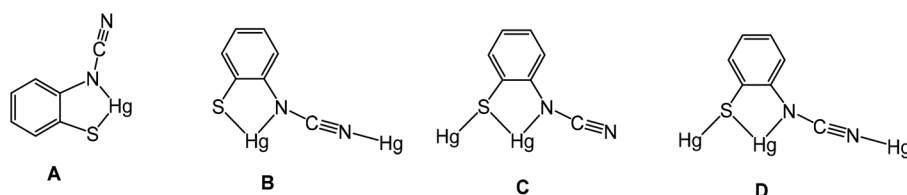


Chart 2 Binding modes (A–D) of the *ortho*-cyano-aminothiophenolate (ocap) ligand.

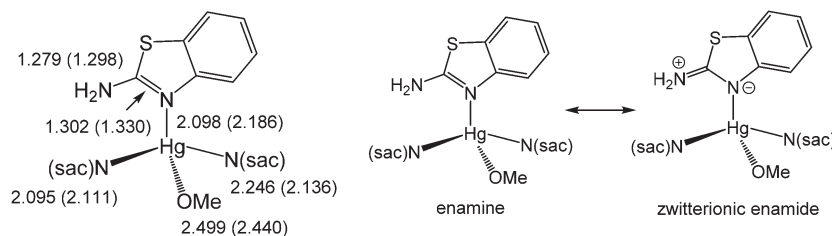


Chart 3 A summary of important bond lengths in [Hg(sac)₂(abt)L] (**2a–b**) (L = MeOH, DMSO) and resonance hybrids for Hg(II)-abt complexes.

bond distances within the abt ligands provides insight into the nature of its bonding to mercury. Thus, while errors are high and differences are not with the accepted 3σ range, there is nevertheless a clear trend. Thus, the putative C=N double bond [**2a** N(3)–C(3) 1.302(10); **2b** N(3)–C(15) 1.330(8) Å] is longer than the supposed single C–N bond to the amine [**2a** N(4)–C(3) 1.279(10); **2b** N(4)–C(15) 1.298(8) Å] suggesting that the zwitterionic resonance form cannot be discounted (Chart 3). This suggests that binding of abt to the Hg(II) centre significantly perturbs its electronic structure leading to a favouring of the zwitterionic enamide over the enamine form.

In order to further probe the ring-opening process, we carried out the reaction of abt and Hg(OAc)₂ at 0 °C and were able to isolate intermediate [Hg(κ²-OAc)(EtOH)(μ-HNCNC₆H₄)₂] (**3**) in good yield (Scheme 2). An X-ray crystallographic study was undertaken the results of which are displayed in Fig. 1.

The molecule consists of a Hg(II)–Hg(II) centre spanned by two 2-aminobenzothiazolate ligands, resulting from deprotonation of abt. Binding to mercury is through the two nitrogen atoms, the distance to the endocyclic nitrogen of 2.071(6) Å being slightly longer than that of 2.040(8) Å to the exocyclic amide. The two N–C bonds differ significantly, that to the amide [N2–C1 1.286(10) Å] being shorter than the endocyclic bond [N1–C1 1.348(11) Å]. The coordination sphere of each mercury atom is completed by a chelating acetate ligand [O1–Hg1–O2 51.38(2)°] and a molecule of ethanol. Thus, ignoring the metal–metal interaction, each mercury center is five-coordinate and the coordination geometry is best described as a highly distorted trigonal bipyramid with the two nitrogen atoms occupying axial sites [N1–Hg1–N2 158.8(2)°]. Two resonance structures can be drawn for the bridging 2-aminobenzothiazolate ligand (Chart 4) and on the basis of the bond

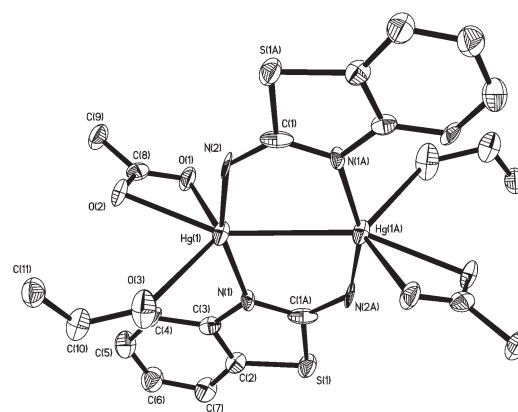


Fig. 1 Molecular structure of **3**. Thermal ellipsoids are displayed at 50% probability and hydrogen atoms omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths (Å) and bond angles (°): Hg1–Hg1A 3.094(1), Hg1–N1 2.067(6), Hg1–N2 2.040(8), Hg1–O1 2.560(7), Hg1–O2 2.481(6), Hg1–O3 2.592(8), N1–C1A 1.348(11), N2–C1 1.286(10), C1–S1A 1.738(8); N1A–C1–N2 126.5(7), N1–Hg–N2 158.5(2), O1–Hg–O2 114.5(2), N1–Hg1–O3 91.1(2).

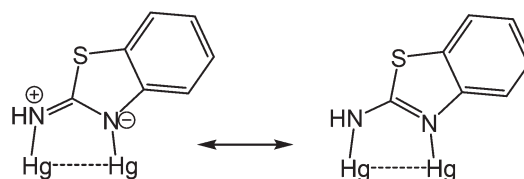
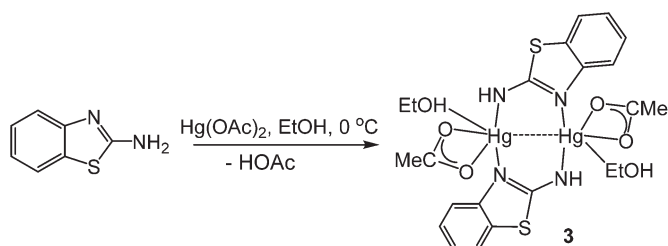


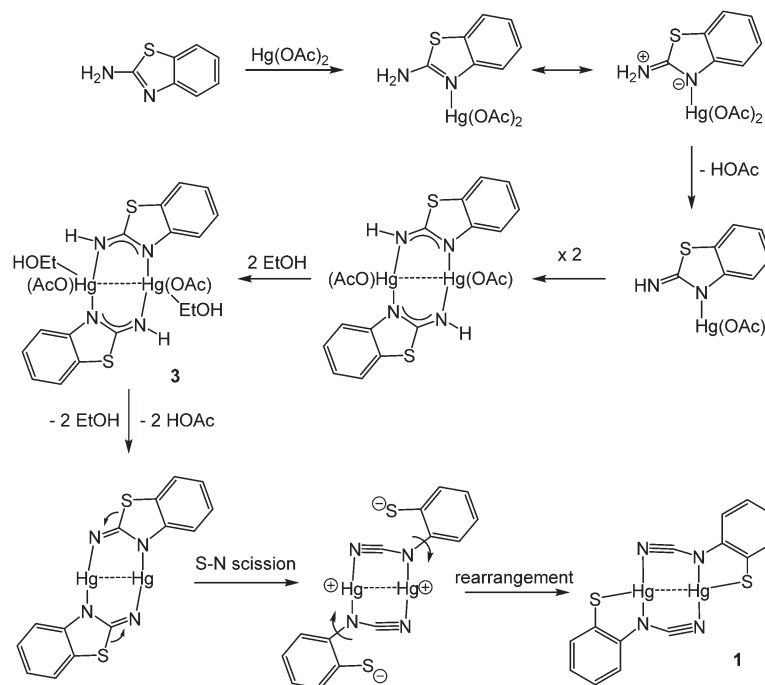
Chart 4 Resonance hybrids for the bridging 2-aminobenzothiazolate ligand.

lengths and angles found in **3** we conclude that actual structure lies closer to the zwitterionic form.

Redissolving **3** in ethanol and heating afforded **1a**. This allows a plausible mechanistic pathway for the formation of [Hg{SC₆H₃XN(C≡N)}]_n (**1a–e**) (Scheme 3) to be suggested. Initial generation of a simple abt adduct is proposed, two resonance hybrids of which are possible. As a result of the change in electronegativity of the endocyclic nitrogen upon binding to Hg(II), the zwitterionic hybrid is populated which has an acidic proton and can eliminate acetic acid. This leads to formation of an uncharged mercuric amide (ketimide); dimerisation and addition of ethanol to which afford intermediate **3**. Upon heating, elimination of a second equivalent of acetic acid affords a highly strained bridging diamide, which undergoes



Scheme 2 Formation of **3** from reaction of abt and Hg(OAc)₂ at 0 °C.



Scheme 3 Suggested pathway for the ring-open dehydrogenation of abt upon reaction with $\text{Hg}(\text{OAc})_2$.

C–S bond scission, and rotation about the single N–Ar bond allows sulfur to find to bind to chalcogenophilic $\text{Hg}(\text{II})$ resulting in formation of **1**.

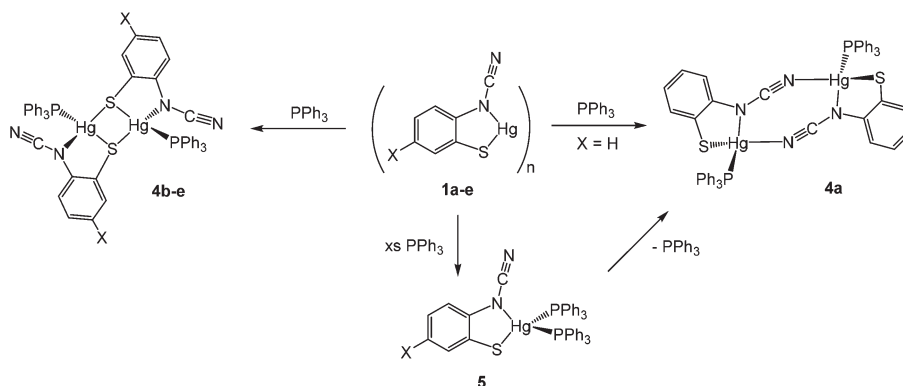
(iii) Reactions with PPh_3 : synthesis of $[\text{Hg}\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_3\text{XN}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}(\text{PPh}_3)_2$ (4**) and identification of two structural types**

We note at the outset of our reactivity studies that $\text{Hg}(\text{II})$ is a d^{10} metal centre and thus, lacking any crystal field stabilisation energy, is labile. This, coupled with the large size and relatively *soft* nature of $\text{Hg}(\text{II})$ suggests that the structures of the phosphine adducts shown below are likely those which have the lowest ground state energies in the solid-state. In solution there may well be a number of interconverting species, and this is validated by the broad nature of the $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR spectra. Thus, we do not suggest that the different coordi-

nation geometries shown in the solid-state are also those adopted in solution.

We began our exploration of the chemistry of **1a–e** by trying to break down the supposed polymeric framework upon reaction with PPh_3 . This strategy was successful and in all cases addition of *ca.* 2 equivalents of PPh_3 resulted in formation of adducts $[\text{Hg}\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_3\text{XN}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}(\text{PPh}_3)_2]$ in high (60–83%) yields, being isolated as pale yellow air-stable solids (Scheme 4). Phosphine coordination was easily confirmed in the $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR spectra, all showing a broad singlet resonance at *ca.* 25–35 ppm and in the IR spectrum the distinct $\text{C}\equiv\text{N}$ vibration was still apparent.

Crystal structures were carried out on **4a**, **4b** and **4d** and these revealed that the solid-state structure, and in some cases the coordination mode of the ocap ligand was dependent



Scheme 4 Reactions of **1a–e** with PPh_3 .



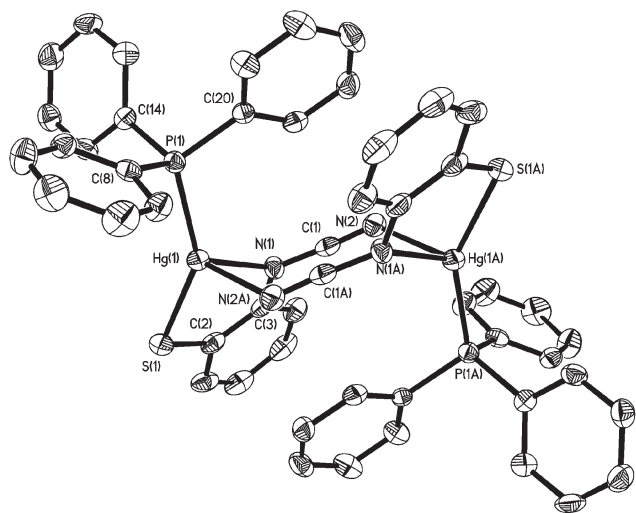


Fig. 2 Molecular structure of [Hg(SC₆H₄N(C≡N))](PPh₃)₂ **4a**.⁸ Thermal ellipsoids are displayed at 50% probability and hydrogen atoms omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths (Å) and bond angles (°): Hg1–N1 2.312(4), Hg1–S1 2.352(2), Hg1–P1 2.373(2), Hg1–N2A 2.517(5), N1–C1 1.287(6), N2–C1 1.153(6), S1–Hg1–N1 81.76(11), N1–Hg1–N2A 91.86(14), S1–Hg1–P1 147.76(5), N1–Hg1–P1 122.04(11), N1–C1–N2 176.2(6).

upon the nature of the ocap ligand. The molecular structure of $[\text{Hg}\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_4\text{N}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}(\text{PPh}_3)_2]$ (**4a**) is shown in Fig. 2.⁸ It is a centrosymmetric dimer in which the coordination geometry at each Hg(II) centre is a distorted N_2PS tetrahedron. The *ortho*-cyano-aminothiophenolate ligands adopts coordination mode

B (Chart 2) chelating to one mercury [N1–Hg1–S1 81.76(11)°], while bridging to a second through coordination of cyanide. This gives an eight-membered Hg₂N₄C₂ ring which, because of the linear nature of the N–C≡N subunit, is akin to a chair configuration of a six-membered ring. As expected, the two Hg–N distances differ significantly, the longer Hg1–N2A of 2.517(5) Å being akin to a simple mercury–amide interaction. Perhaps most importantly, adoption of this bonding mode has little effect on the bond distances within the N–C≡N moiety which still displays long and short N–C interactions [N1–C1 1.287(6), N2–C1 1.153(6) Å]. This is also reflected in the observation of a strong C≡N stretch at 2140 cm^{−1} in the IR spectrum.

Complexes **4b–e** have a different solid-state structure to that in **4a**, the ocap ligands adopting coordination mode C (Chart 2). The molecular structure of $[\text{Hg}\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_3\text{BrN}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}(\text{PPh}_3)_2]$ (**4d**) is shown in Fig. 3.⁸ It is again a centrosymmetric dimer, but unlike **4a** consists of a central Hg_2S_2 core with each mercury centre also being coordinated to one phosphine and a nitrogen of an $\text{N}-\text{C}\equiv\text{N}$ moiety. Both $\text{Hg}-\text{S}$ and $\text{Hg}-\text{N}$ bond lengths are slightly shorter than those in **4a** and the $\text{Hg}-\text{P}$ distance is longer. The $\text{N}-\text{C}\equiv\text{N}$ subunit is linear $[\text{N}1-\text{C}1-\text{N}2\ 174.6(7)^\circ]$ and shows long $[\text{N}1-\text{C}1\ 1.287(8)\ \text{\AA}]$ and short $[\text{N}2-\text{C}1\ 1.154(8)\ \text{\AA}]$ $\text{N}-\text{C}$ bonds. Bridging of the thiolate ligands is highly asymmetric $[\text{Hg}1-\text{S}1\ 2.411(2), \text{Hg}1-\text{S}1\text{A}\ 2.871(2)\ \text{\AA}]$, suggesting a better Lewis model is that shown in Fig. 3b.

Reasons for the adoption of different binding modes of **1** are not obvious. It is hard to attribute the difference to steric effects as only minor changes are made at a ring position, which appears not to show any significant intra- or intermolecular interactions in either form. In the solid state, the

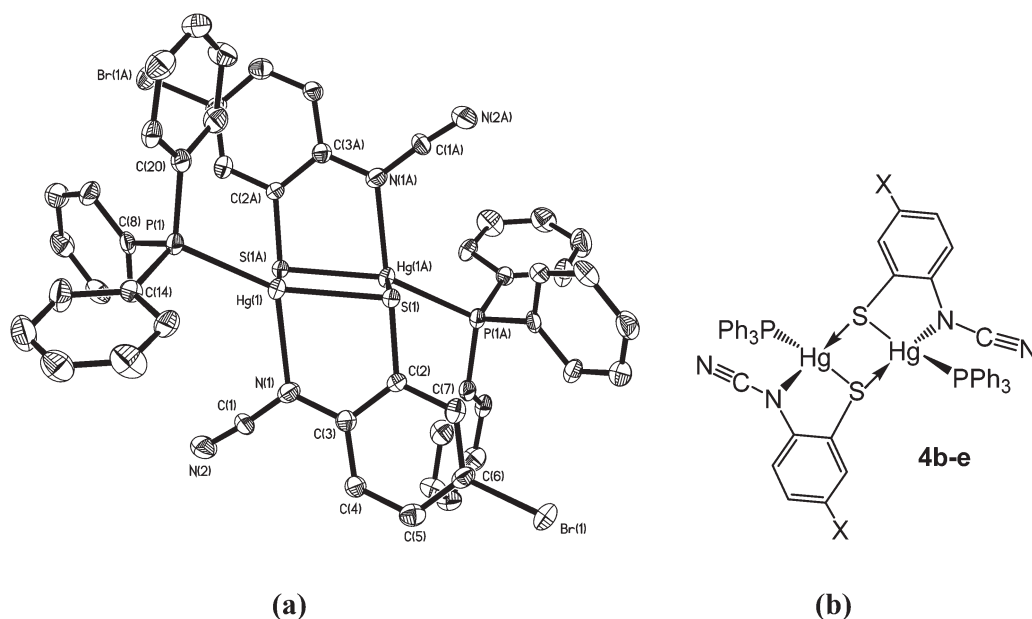
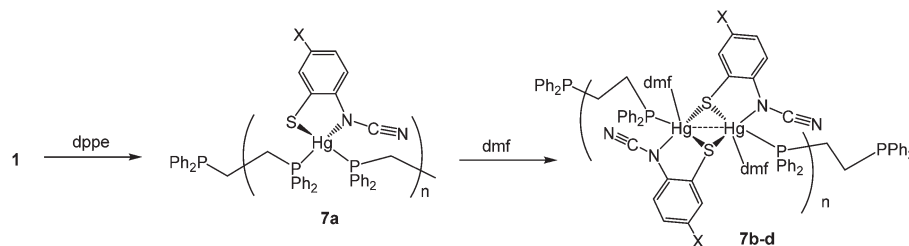


Fig. 3 (a) Molecular structure of **4d**.⁸ Thermal ellipsoids are displayed at 50% probability and hydrogen atoms omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths (Å) and bond angles (°): Hg1–N1 2.266(5), Hg1–S1 2.411(2), Hg1–S1A 2.871(2), Hg1–P1 2.272(2), N1–C1 1.287(8), N2–C1 1.154(8); Hg1–S1–Hg1A 83.57(5), S1–Hg1–S1A 96.43(5), S1–Hg1–N1 80.76(14), P1–Hg1–S1 151.40(6), P1–Hg1–N1 122.19(13), N1–C1–N2 174.6(7); (b) line drawing highlighting the bonding within **4b–e**.

This journal is © The Royal Society of Chemistry 2022



Scheme 6 Reactions of **1a–d** with dppe followed by recrystallisation from DMF.

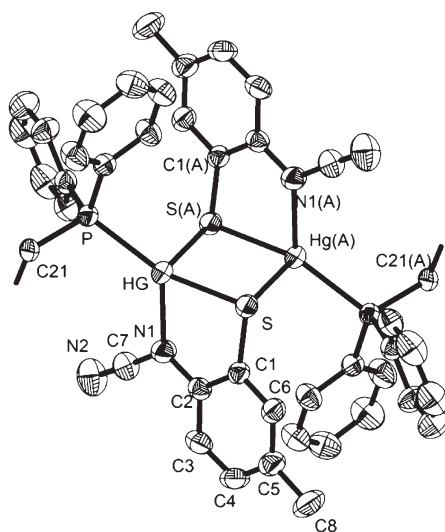


Fig. 4 Molecular structure of $[\text{Hg}\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_3\text{MeN}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}(\text{DMF})(\mu\text{-}\kappa^1, \kappa^1\text{-dppe})]_n$ (**7b**). Thermal ellipsoids at the 50% level and hydrogen atoms omitted for clarity and disordered DMF are omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths (Å) and bond angles (°): Hg–N1 2.275(3), Hg–S 2.4370(9), Hg(A)–S 2.9350(9), Hg–O 2.880(5), Hg–S–Hg(A) 87.12 (3), N1–Hg–P 128.61(9), N1–Hg–S 81.13(9), S–Hg–P 146.39(3), S(A)–Hg–S 92.88(3), S(A)–Hg–P 102.32(3). Symmetry operator A: $1 - x, 1 - y, 1 - z$.

theless coordination of DMF is clearly shown by the trigonal bipyramidal nature of the Hg(II) centre the DMF and one of the sulfur ligands occupying the axial sites [S–Hg–O 172.47°]. Coordinated DMF is retained upon redissolution, with **7b–d** each showing a pair of doublets in the $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR spectrum, for example at 27.5 and 36.5 (J_{PP} 36 Hz) for **7b**.

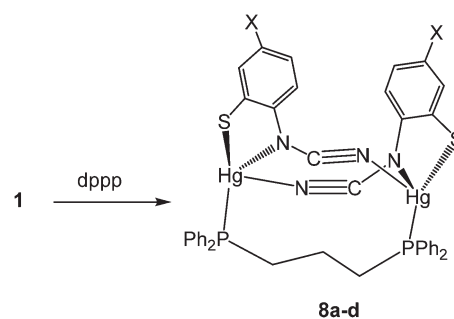
We tentatively suggest that in all cases the initially formed product has the structure adopted by **7a** and upon redissolution in DMF they rearrange to form the DMF adducts, which are subsequently retained in CDCl_3 . The surprising feature of this transformation is not the coordination of the DMF, but the increased hapticity of the *ortho*-cyano-aminothiophenolate ligand; one might expect that addition of another ligand would lead to a reduction in hapticity if it changed at all. This presents evidence that, in solution, coordination polymers may breakdown to yield (at least in part) mononuclear fragments $[\text{Hg}\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_3\text{XN}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}(\text{dppe})]$ which can reassemble to give the observed coordination polymers.

(vi) Reactions with 1,3-bis(diphenylphosphino)propane (dppp): synthesis of dimeric $[\text{Hg}_2\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_3\text{XN}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}_2(\mu, \kappa^1, \kappa^1\text{-dppp})]$ (**8**)

As far as we are aware, reactions of 1,3-bis(diphenylphosphino)propane (dppp) with Hg(II) salts have not been previously investigated. Alyea and co-workers reported details of a closely related diphosphine, $\text{Ph}_2\text{PCH}_2\text{SiMe}_2\text{CH}_2\text{PPh}_2$, whereby the central methylene unit has been replaced by SiMe_2 ,^{13b} and this leads to formation of the chelate complexes $[\text{HgX}_2(\kappa^2\text{-Ph}_2\text{PCH}_2\text{SiMe}_2\text{CH}_2\text{PPh}_2)]$ which were crystallographically characterised.

Reactions of **1a–d** with equimolar amounts of dppp afforded $[\text{Hg}_2\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_3\text{XN}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}_2(\mu, \kappa^1, \kappa^1\text{-dppp})]$ (**8a–d**) in high yields (70–80%) (Scheme 7). Crystal structures were carried out on **8b–c** and as they are not significantly different only that for **8c** is discussed here. Unexpectedly these are binuclear complexes in which Hg...Hg vector is spanned by a diphosphine and two ocap ligands. The latter bind in mode **B** (Chart 2) acting as a chelate to one metal centre and linking to the second through coordination of the $\text{C}\equiv\text{N}$ moiety. Binding of the dppp constricts the two ocap ligands to adopt a *syn* rather than the *anti*-conformation seen in **4a** (see above). This does not affect the bite angle significantly [S1–Hg1–N1 81.05(17), S2–Hg2–N3 81.46(18)°].

In the solid-state, the two phosphorus centres in **8b–c** are non-equivalent and this is retained in solution, $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR spectra consisting of a pair of doublets; in **8c** at 21.5 and 36.5 ppm (J_{PP} 41 Hz). In contrast, both **8a** and **8d** display only a singlet resonance, although it is broad.



Scheme 7 Reactions of **1** with dppp.

We cannot say for certain that the same structure is adopted in these complexes. The different ^{31}P NMR spectra may result from a different structural type of due to the flexibility of the core, leading to either solution equivalence or near equivalence of the two phosphorus nuclei. Unfortunately, in the absence of structural data for either **8a** or **8d** we are unable to differentiate between these possibilities.

(vii) Reactions with 1,4-bis(diphenylphosphino)butane (dppb): synthesis of coordination polymers $[\text{Hg}\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_3\text{XN}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}(\mu\text{-}\kappa^1, \kappa^1\text{-dppb})]_n$ (9a-d**)**

Reactions of **1a-d** with bis(diphenylphosphino)butane (dppb) proceeded at room temperature over 1 h to afford coordination polymers $[\text{Hg}\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_3\text{XN}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}(\mu\text{-}\kappa^1, \kappa^1\text{-dppb})]_n$ (**9a-d**) (Scheme 8). This is confirmed by the molecular structure of $[\text{Hg}\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_3\text{MeN}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}(\text{Ph}_2\text{P}(\text{CH}_2)_4\text{PPh}_2)]_n$ (**9b**) (Fig. 6)⁸ which is similar to that of **7a** (Fig. 5), consisting of a 1D coordination polymer in which tetrahedral $\text{Hg}(\text{II})$ centres are linked by diphosphines. The ocap ligand binds in a simple chelating fashion (A Chart 2) subtending an angle of $81.13(9)^\circ$ at mercury. Both Hg–S and Hg–N bond lengths of 2.437(1) and 2.275(3) Å respectively are within the expected ranges. This binding mode is akin to that previously found for $\text{Hg}(\text{II})$ 1,2-benzenedithiolate complexes such as $[\text{Hg}(\text{SC}_6\text{H}_4\text{S})_2][\text{NEt}_4]_2$.²³ This is in accord with the linear nature of the $\text{N-C}\equiv\text{N}$ unit [N1-C7-N2 $177.45(5)^\circ$] and the significant difference in the nitrogen–carbon bonds [N1-C7 1.307(5), N2-C7 1.149(6) Å]. The structure of **9b** is akin to that of $[\text{Hg}(\text{SC}_3\text{S}_3\text{S})(\text{Ph}_2\text{PCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{PPh}_2)]_n$ reported by McKenzie and co-workers²⁰ in which the dithiolate ligand subtends an angle of $89.56(8)^\circ$ at the metal centre and Hg–S bonds are 2.560(3) and 2.530(3) Å. The $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR spectra of **9b-d** all show a pair of doublets suggesting that the inequivalence of the phosphorus centres observed in the solid-state for **9b** is maintained in solution; although notably **9a** shows only a single resonance, albeit broad.

(viii) Reactions with 1,1'-bis(diphenylphosphino)ferrocene (dppf)

The diphosphine 1,1'-bis(diphenylphosphino)ferrocene (dppf) is known to be extremely flexible and able to bind to metals in a range of different ways. Most relevant to our work is the observation that addition of dppf to a range of mercuric

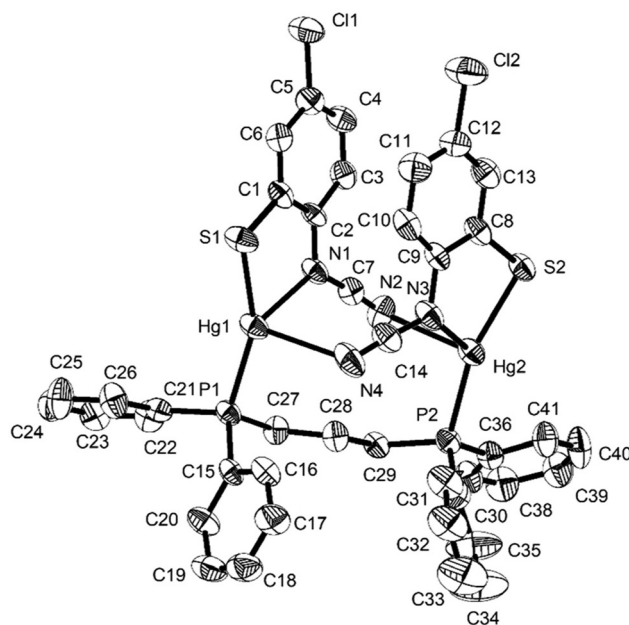
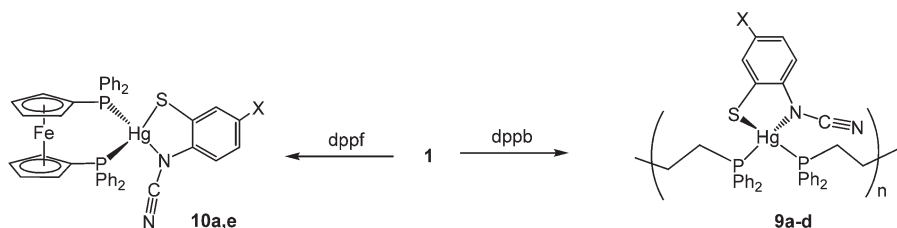


Fig. 5 Molecular structure of $[\text{Hg}\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_3\text{CIN}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}_2(\mu\text{-dppb})]_n$ (**8c**). Thermal ellipsoids at the 50% level and hydrogen atoms are omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths (Å) and bond angles ($^\circ$): Hg1–N1 2.367(6), Hg1–N4 2.835(6), Hg2–N2 2.723(6), Hg2–N3 2.249(8), Hg1–S1 2.372(2), Hg2–S2 2.372(2), Hg1–P1 2.395(2), Hg2–P2 2.385(2), Hg1...Hg2 5.481(2), N1–C7 1.312(11), N2–C7 1.149(11), N3–C14 1.280(12), N4–C14 1.173(12); N1–Hg1–S1 $81.06(18)^\circ$, N1–Hg1–P1 $114.72(18)^\circ$, S1–Hg1–P1 $157.36(8)^\circ$, N3–Hg2–S2 $81.6(2)^\circ$, N3–Hg2–P2 $122.5(2)^\circ$, S2–Hg2–P2 $155.74(8)^\circ$.

halides, HgX_2 ($\text{X} = \text{Cl}, \text{Br}, \text{I}, \text{CN}$)²⁴ affords crystallographically characterised mononuclear $[\text{HgX}_2(\kappa^2\text{-dppf})]$ ($\text{X} = \text{Cl}, \text{Br}$) in which the diphosphine binds in a chelate fashion.^{20,25} Reactions of **1a** and **1e** with one equivalent of dppf afforded **10a** and **10e** respectively as analytically pure brown-yellow solids in good yields. Each shows a singlet in the $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR spectrum consistent with the equivalence of the two phosphorus centres. This does not unequivocally differentiate between mononuclear and coordination polymer structures, however, in light of the mononuclear nature of $[\text{HgCl}_2(\kappa^2\text{-dppf})]$ and the simple nature of the cyclopentadienyl resonances (two apparent singlets in each case) then we favour assignment as mononuclear species (Scheme 8). We have been unable to confirm this crystallographically.



Scheme 8 Reactions of **1** with dppb and dppf.



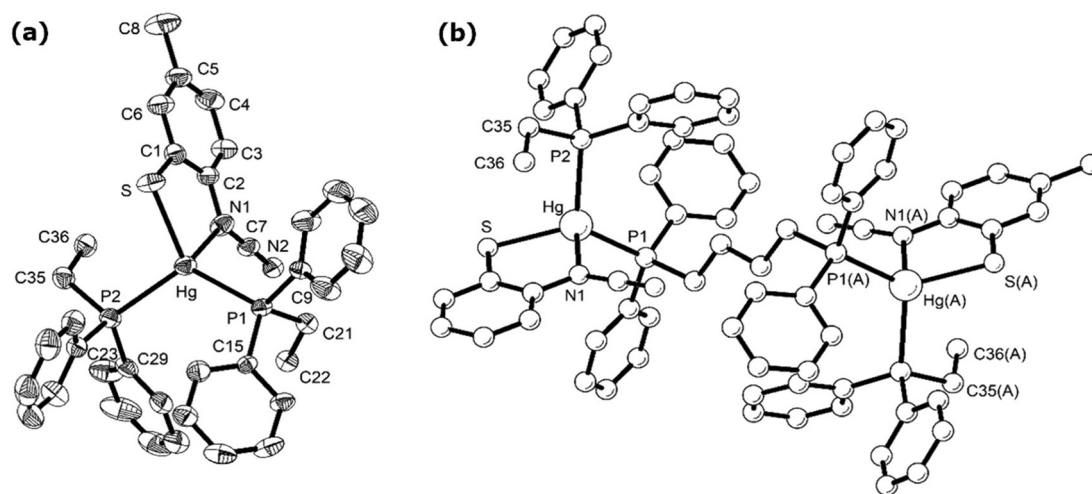


Fig. 6 Molecular structure of **9b**.⁸ Thermal ellipsoids at the 50% level and hydrogen atoms are omitted for clarity. (a) Showing repeating unit, (b) showing section of the polymeric chain. Selected bond lengths (Å) and bond angles (°): Hg–N1 2.332(4), Hg–S 2.4616(13), Hg–P1 2.4650(12), Hg–P2 2.5522(13); S–Hg–N1 80.72(11), S–Hg–P(1) 131.83(5), S–Hg–P(2) 106.56(4), P1–Hg–P2 117.88(4). Symmetry operator A: $-x, 1-y, 1-z$.

3. Summary and conclusions

In this contribution we have described the unexpected ring-opening dehydrogenation of 2-aminobenzothiazoles (abt) at a Hg(II) centre, resulting in the facile preparation of otherwise inaccessible *ortho*-cyano-aminothiophenolate (ocap) complexes of the type, $[\text{Hg}\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_3\text{XN}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}]_n$. Their molecular structures have not been unequivocally established, but their insolubility strongly suggests that they are coordination polymers, although related cyclic oligomers cannot be completely excluded. Precise mechanistic details of the ring-open dehydrogenation remain unknown, but analysis of structural parameters for Hg-bound abt complexes suggest that a zwitterionic resonance hybrid which leads to enhanced acidity of the amino-proton(s) may be important. This is further supported by the isolation of an intermediate **2** in which a pair of deprotonated 2-aminobenzothiazoles bridge a Hg...Hg vector. The ring-opening transformation appears to be specific to acetate complexes, and this may be a result of the reversible nature of the N–H bond scission-formation. Thus, with the weak acid, HOAc, the transformation lies to the left-hand side, while for stronger acids (HX, X = Cl, Br *etc.*) it lies to the right-hand side.

Addition of phosphines to $[\text{Hg}\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_3\text{XN}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}]_n$ results in scission of the polymeric (or oligomeric) structure and a series of mono- or binuclear Hg(II) complexes, which show four different coordination modes of the bound ocap ligands. We rely heavily on single crystal XRD for this insight, and it may be that some of these structures are interconverting in solution; something that requires further investigation. Perhaps the most unexpected of these structures are the small-bite angle diphosphine complexes, $[\text{Hg}\{\text{SC}_6\text{H}_3\text{XN}(\text{C}\equiv\text{N})\}(\kappa^1\text{-dppm})_2]$ in which the ocap ligands bridge the Hg₂ centre at the expense of the diphosphine, which normally binds to metals through both phosphorus atoms. In related work, we have shown upon transmetalation of ocap from Hg(II) to Pt(II)

and Pd(II), the ligand exclusively adopts a chelating mode.²⁶ Binding of ocap ligands to redox-active transition metal centres also allows us to better study their ability to act in a redox-active manner akin to closely related dithiolene and *ortho*-aminothiophenolate ligands as discussed in the introduction.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

Acknowledgements

We thank the University of Tikrit and King's College London for partial support of this work. S. B.-M. thanks Erasmus Mundus for a Postdoctoral Fellowship and S. G. thanks the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission for the award of a Commonwealth Scholarship. We thank Professor Derek A. Tocher (UCL) and Dr Georgia Orton (University of Birmingham) for crystallographic advice.

References

- (a) W. Kaim and B. Schwederski, *Coord. Chem. Rev.*, 2010, **254**, 1580–1588; (b) W. Kaim, *Inorg. Chem.*, 2011, **50**, 9752–9765; (c) O. R. Luca and R. H. Crabtree, *Chem. Soc. Rev.*, 2013, **42**, 1440–1459; (d) D. L. J. Broere, R. Plessius and J. I. van der Vlugt, *Chem. Soc. Rev.*, 2015, **44**, 6886–6915.
- (a) N. Robertson and L. Cronin, *Coord. Chem. Rev.*, 2002, **227**, 93–127; (b) J. A. McCleverty, *Prog. Inorg. Chem.*, 1968, **10**, 49–221; (c) R. Eisenberg and H. B. Gray, *Inorg. Chem.*, 2011, **50**, 9741–9751; (d) R. Kato, *Chem. Rev.*, 2004, **104**, 5319–5346.



- 3 (a) S. R. Presow, M. Ghosh, E. Bill, T. Weyhermüller and K. Wieghardt, *Inorg. Chim. Acta*, 2011, **374**, 226–239; (b) P. Ghosh, E. Bill, T. Weyhermüller and K. Wieghardt, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2003, **125**, 3967–3969; (c) P. Ghosh, A. Begum, E. Bill, T. Weyhermüller and K. Wieghardt, *Inorg. Chem.*, 2003, **42**, 3208–3215; (d) S. Sproules and K. Wieghardt, *Coord. Chem. Rev.*, 2010, **254**, 1358–1382; (e) D. Herebian, E. Bothe, E. Bill, T. Weyhermüller and K. Wieghardt, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2001, **123**, 10012–10023.
- 4 (a) W.-F. Liaw, N.-H. Lee, C.-M. Chen, G.-H. Lee and S.-M. Peng, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2000, **122**, 488–494; (b) W.-F. Liaw, C.-M. Lee, G.-H. Lee and S.-M. Peng, *Inorg. Chem.*, 1998, **37**, 6396–6398; (c) W.-F. Liaw, C.-K. Hsieh, G.-Y. Lin and G.-H. Lee, *Inorg. Chem.*, 2001, **40**, 4468–4475.
- 5 (a) D. Sellman, S. Emig, F. W. Heinemann and F. Knoch, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed. Engl.*, 1997, **36**, 1201–1203; (b) D. Sellman, S. Emig and F. W. Heinemann, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed. Engl.*, 1997, **36**, 1734–1736.
- 6 (a) P. Kumar, D. J. SantaLucia, K. Kaniewska-Laskowska, S. V. Lindeman, A. Ozarowski, J. Krzystek, M. Ozerov, J. Telser, J. F. Berry and A. T. Fiedler, *Inorg. Chem.*, 2020, **59**, 16178–16193; (b) M. Ebadi and A. B. P. Lever, *Inorg. Chem.*, 1999, **38**, 467–474; (c) J. Vincente, M. T. Chicote, M. D. Bermudez, P. G. Jones, C. Fittschen and G. M. Sheldrick, *J. Chem. Soc., Dalton Trans.*, 1986, 2361–2366; (d) K. Sorasaene, J. R. Galán-Mascarós and K. R. Dunbar, *Inorg. Chem.*, 2002, **41**, 433–436; (e) J. C. Noveron, M. M. Olmstead and P. K. Mascharak, *Inorg. Chem.*, 1998, **37**, 1138–1139; (f) A. Majumder and S. Sarkar, *Inorg. Chim. Acta*, 2009, **362**, 3493–3501; (g) S. Patra, B. Sarkar, S. M. Mobin, W. Kaim and G. K. Lahiri, *Inorg. Chem.*, 2003, **42**, 6469–6473.
- 7 (a) R. J. Crutchly and M. L. Naklicki, *Inorg. Chem.*, 1989, **28**, 1955–1958; (b) R. J. Crutchly, *Coord. Chem. Rev.*, 2001, **219–221**, 125–155.
- 8 S. A. Al-Jibori, A. A. Irzoqi, E. G. H. Al-Saraj, A. S. M. Al-Janabi, S. Basak-Modi, S. Ghosh, K. Merzweiler, C. Wagner, H. Schmidt and G. Hogarth, *Dalton Trans.*, 2015, **44**, 14217–14219.
- 9 (a) E. C. Wang, J. Li, Y.-L. Li, E.-C. Yang and X.-J. Zhao, *Synth. React. Inorg., Met.-Org., Nano-Met. Chem.*, 2011, **41**, 791–797; (b) A. Giusti and G. Peyronel, *Spectrochim. Acta, Part A*, 1982, **38**, 975–979.
- 10 S. A. Al-Jibori, Z. S. Afandi, K. Merzweiler, C. Wagner, H. Schmidt, S. Basak-Modi and G. Hogarth, *Polyhedron*, 2014, **81**, 442–449.
- 11 (a) T. S. Lobana, M. K. Sandhu, M. R. Snow and E. R. T. Tiekink, *Acta Crystallogr., Sect. C: Cryst. Struct. Commun.*, 1988, **44**, 179–181; (b) N. A. Bell, T. D. Dee, M. Goldstein, P. J. McKenna and I. W. Nowell, *Inorg. Chim. Acta*, 1983, **71**, 135–140.
- 12 (a) N. A. Bell, S. J. Coles, C. P. Constable, M. B. Hursthouse, R. Mansor and N. J. Salvin, *Polyhedron*, 2002, **21**, 1845–1855; (b) J. Burt, W. Levason and G. Reid, *Coord. Chem. Rev.*, 2014, **260**, 65–115.
- 13 (a) P. A. W. Dean and R. S. Srivastava, *Can. J. Chem.*, 1985, **63**, 2829–2839; (b) E. C. Alyea, G. Ferguson, R. P. Shakya and P. R. Meehan, *Inorg. Chem.*, 1997, **36**, 4749–4752; (c) W. Schuh, G. Haegele, R. Olschner, A. Lindner, P. Dvortsak, H. Kopacka, K. Wurst and P. Peringer, *J. Chem. Soc., Dalton Trans.*, 2002, 19–27.
- 14 R. J. Puddephatt, *Chem. Soc. Rev.*, 1983, **12**, 99–127.
- 15 M. Lusser and P. Peringer, *Chem. Ber.*, 1985, **118**, 2140–2143.
- 16 P. Peringer and M. Lusser, *Inorg. Chem.*, 1985, **24**, 109–110.
- 17 B. Hämmerle, E. P. Müller, D. L. Wilkinson, G. Müller and P. Peringer, *J. Chem. Soc., Chem. Commun.*, 1989, 1527–1528.
- 18 M. Lusser and P. Peringer, *Z. Naturforsch., B: Anorg. Chem., Org. Chem.*, 1985, **40**, 1417–1418.
- 19 P. D. Harvey, K. T. Aye, K. Hierso, E. Isabel, I. Lognot, Y. Mugnier and F. D. Rochon, *Inorg. Chem.*, 1994, **33**, 5981–5982.
- 20 (a) J. McGinley, V. McKee and C. J. McKenzie, *Acta Crystallogr., Sect. C: Cryst. Struct. Commun.*, 1998, **54**, 345–347; (b) T. R. Jenson, J. McGinley, V. McKee and C. J. McKenzie, *Acta Chem. Scand.*, 1998, **52**, 622–626.
- 21 M. Camalli, F. Caruso and L. Zambonelli, *Acta Crystallogr., Sect. B: Struct. Crystallogr. Cryst. Chem.*, 1982, **48**, 2468–2470.
- 22 X. Li, Y. Liu, Y. Hao, X.-J. Yang and B. Wu, *Inorg. Chem. Commun.*, 2010, **13**, 511–513.
- 23 K. Baba, T. Okamura, H. Yamamoto, T. Yamamoto and N. Ueyama, *Inorg. Chem.*, 2008, **47**, 2837–2848.
- 24 K. R. Mann, W. H. Morrison, Jr. and D. N. Hendrickson, *Inorg. Chem.*, 1974, **13**, 1180–1185.
- 25 B. T. Jahromi, A. N. Kharat and A. Bakhoda, *J. Coord. Chem.*, 2013, **66**, 2290–2296.
- 26 S. A. Al-Jibori, A. A. Irzoqi, A. S. M. Al-Janabi, A. I. A. Al-Nassiry, S. Basak-Modi, S. Ghosh, C. Wagner and G. Hogarth, manuscript in preparation.

