

CrossMark  
click for updatesCite this: *Chem. Sci.*, 2016, 7, 803

## Isolation, structure and reactivity of a scandium boryl oxycarbene complex†

Baoli Wang,<sup>a</sup> Xiaohui Kang,<sup>ab</sup> Masayoshi Nishiura,<sup>a</sup> Yi Luo<sup>\*b</sup> and Zhaomin Hou<sup>\*ab</sup>

The reaction of a half-sandwich scandium boryl complex **1** with CO (1 atm) afforded a novel boryl oxycarbene complex **2**. The structure of **2** was characterized by <sup>1</sup>H, <sup>13</sup>C and <sup>11</sup>B NMR, X-ray diffraction, and DFT analysis. Further reaction of **2** with CO (1 atm) yielded a phenylamido- and boryl-substituted enediolate complex **3** through C–C bond formation between CO and the carbene unit in **2** and cleavage and rearrangement of the Si–N bond in the silylene-linked Cp–amido ligand. Upon heating, insertion of the carbene atom into a methine C–H bond in the boryl ligand of **2** took place to give an alkoxide complex **4**. The reactions of **2** with pyridine and 2-methylpyridine led to insertion of the carbene atom into an *ortho*-C–H bond of pyridine and into a methyl C–H bond of 2-methylpyridine, respectively. The reaction of **2** with ethylene yielded a borylcyclopropyloxy complex **7** through cycloaddition of the carbene atom to ethylene.

Received 24th August 2015  
Accepted 16th September 2015

DOI: 10.1039/c5sc03138a

www.rsc.org/chemicalscience

## Introduction

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an important C<sub>1</sub> building block in chemical industry, as it can be used for the production of synthetic lubrication oils and fuels *via* Fischer–Tropsch reactions.<sup>1</sup> So far, extensive studies on the reaction of CO with transition metal alkyls and hydrides have been reported in relevance to the Fischer–Tropsch process.<sup>1–3</sup> The reaction of early transition-metal (including lanthanide and actinide) alkyls (or hydrides) with CO usually gives η<sup>2</sup>-acyl (or formyl) species that shows carbene-like characteristics in reactivity such as intramolecular 1,2-hydrogen migration, dimerization, and ketene formation.<sup>3–5</sup> The analogous reactions of silyl, amido and phosphido complexes of some early transition metals with CO were also reported.<sup>6</sup> In spite of extensive studies in this area, structurally characterized carbene-like species (or oxycarbene complexes) remains scarce. In 1980, Marks and co-workers reported that the reaction of a sterically demanding bis(pentamethylcyclopentadienyl) thorium neopentyl complex [(C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>Th{CH<sub>2</sub>C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>}Cl] with 1 equivalent of CO could afford a structurally characterizable oxycarbene complex [(C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>)<sub>2</sub>Th{η<sup>2</sup>-OCCH<sub>2</sub>C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>}Cl].<sup>4a</sup> This is perhaps the only precedent of a well-defined oxycarbene complex.

Metal boryl complexes have received much attention in the last few decades because of their important roles in various chemical transformations.<sup>7–9</sup> In this context, the reactions of metal boryl compounds with metal carbonyl complexes were recently reported, such as the nucleophilic addition of [(THF)<sub>2</sub>Li{B(NDippCH)<sub>2</sub>}] (Dipp = 2,6-diisopropylphenyl) to [Fe(CO)<sub>5</sub>] and [Cr(CO)<sub>6</sub>] as well as the intramolecular migratory addition of a boryl ligand to a carbonyl group in [(CO)<sub>4</sub>Co{B(NDippCH)<sub>2</sub>}]<sup>10a,b</sup>. The reaction of metal carbonyl complexes such as K[(η<sup>5</sup>-C<sub>5</sub>H<sub>5</sub>)M(CO)<sub>3</sub>] (M = Mo, W) with B<sub>2</sub>(NMe<sub>2</sub>)<sub>2</sub>I<sub>2</sub> to give oxycarbene complexes was also reported.<sup>10c–e</sup> In contrast, the reaction of gaseous CO with metal boryl compounds remains much less extensively explored.<sup>9b</sup>

In 2011, we reported the reaction of a bis(amidinate)-ligated rare-earth boryl complex [(Me<sub>3</sub>SiCH<sub>2</sub>)C(N<sup>*i*</sup>Pr)<sub>2</sub>]<sub>2</sub>Sc{B(NDippCH)<sub>2</sub>} with gaseous CO (1 atm), which afforded a double CO insertion product. This reaction was proposed to proceed through a scandium borylacyl (or carbene) intermediate, but the isolation of such an acyl (or carbene) species was not achieved.<sup>9b</sup> More recently, we found that a half-sandwich structure unit with a silylene-linked Cp–anilido ligand could serve as a useful platform for the isolation and transformation of rare-earth boryl species such as [Me<sub>2</sub>Si(C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>4</sub>)(NPh)Sc{B(NDippCH)<sub>2</sub>}(μ-Cl)Li(THF)<sub>3</sub>] (**1**).<sup>9c</sup> In this paper, we report the isolation and structural characterization of a boryl oxycarbene complex [Me<sub>2</sub>Si(C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>4</sub>)(NPh)Sc{η<sup>2</sup>-OCB(NDippCH)<sub>2</sub>}(THF)] (**2**) formed by reaction of the half-sandwich scandium boryl complex **1** with CO. The diverse reactivity of the boryl oxycarbene complex **2**, such as intra- and intermolecular sp<sup>2</sup> and sp<sup>3</sup> C–H bond insertion, cyclopropanation with ethylene, and C–C bond formation with another molecule of CO is also described.

<sup>a</sup>Organometallic Chemistry Laboratory and RIKEN Center for Sustainable Resource Science, RIKEN, 2-1 Hirosawa, Wako, Saitama 351-0198, Japan. E-mail: hou@riken.jp

<sup>b</sup>State Key Laboratory of Fine Chemicals, School of Pharmaceutical Science and Technology, Dalian University of Technology, Dalian 116024, China. E-mail: luoyi@dlut.edu.cn

† Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: Synthesis, characterization of compounds 2–7. CCDC 981561–981563, 1042268 and 1042269. For ESI and crystallographic data in CIF or other electronic format see DOI: 10.1039/c5sc03138a

## Results and discussion

### Isolation and structure of a scandium boryl oxycarbene complex

When the half-sandwich scandium boryl (**1**) was exposed to a CO atmosphere (1 atm) at room temperature in benzene- $d_6$ , the insertion of CO into the Sc–boryl bond took place rapidly, selectively yielding the corresponding scandium borylacyl (or oxycarbene) complex **2** in 87% yield as dark blue crystals within 5 min (Scheme 1). The (THF) $_3$ LiCl adduct in **1** is dissociated in this reaction. The reaction of **1** with  $^{13}\text{C}$ -enriched CO afforded the  $^{13}\text{C}$ -labeled analogue **2**- $^{13}\text{C}$  (eqn (1)). The  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectrum of **2** (or **2**- $^{13}\text{C}$ ) in benzene- $d_6$  gave a singlet at  $\delta$  427.4 assignable to the CO group. This signal is considerably downfield shifted than those of reported transition-metal acyl complexes ( $\delta$  214.4–322.9),<sup>11</sup> and even lower than that of the thorium oxycarbene complex  $[(\text{C}_5\text{Me}_5)_2\text{Th}\{\eta^2\text{-OCCH}_2\text{C}(\text{CH}_3)_3\text{Cl}\}]$  ( $\delta$  360.2),<sup>4a</sup> clearly demonstrating the presence of a carbene species. The  $^{11}\text{B}\{\text{H}\}$  NMR of **2** in benzene- $d_6$  showed a singlet at  $\delta$  16.9, which is 6.4 ppm up-field shifted from that of a cobalt Fischer-type boryl oxycarbene complex  $[(\text{OC})_5\text{Cr}\{\text{C}(\text{OEt})\text{B}(\text{NDippCH})_2\}]$  ( $\delta$  23.3).<sup>10a</sup>

Single crystals of **2** suitable for X-ray diffraction studies were obtained by recrystallization from a mixed hexane–benzene solution at  $-30^\circ\text{C}$ . An X-ray diffraction study revealed that the Sc atom is bonded to the CO unit in a  $\eta^2$ -fashion (Fig. 1). The Sc–O1 bond distance (2.114(2) Å) is significantly shorter than that of the Sc–C1 bond (2.194(2) Å), similar to what was observed in the thorium oxycarbene complex  $[(\text{C}_5\text{Me}_5)_2\text{Th}\{\eta^2\text{-}$

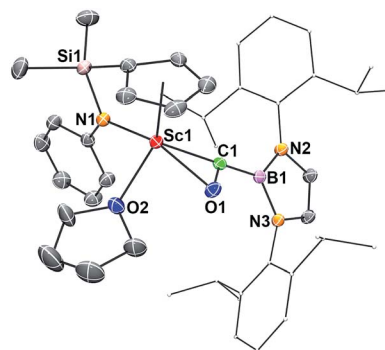
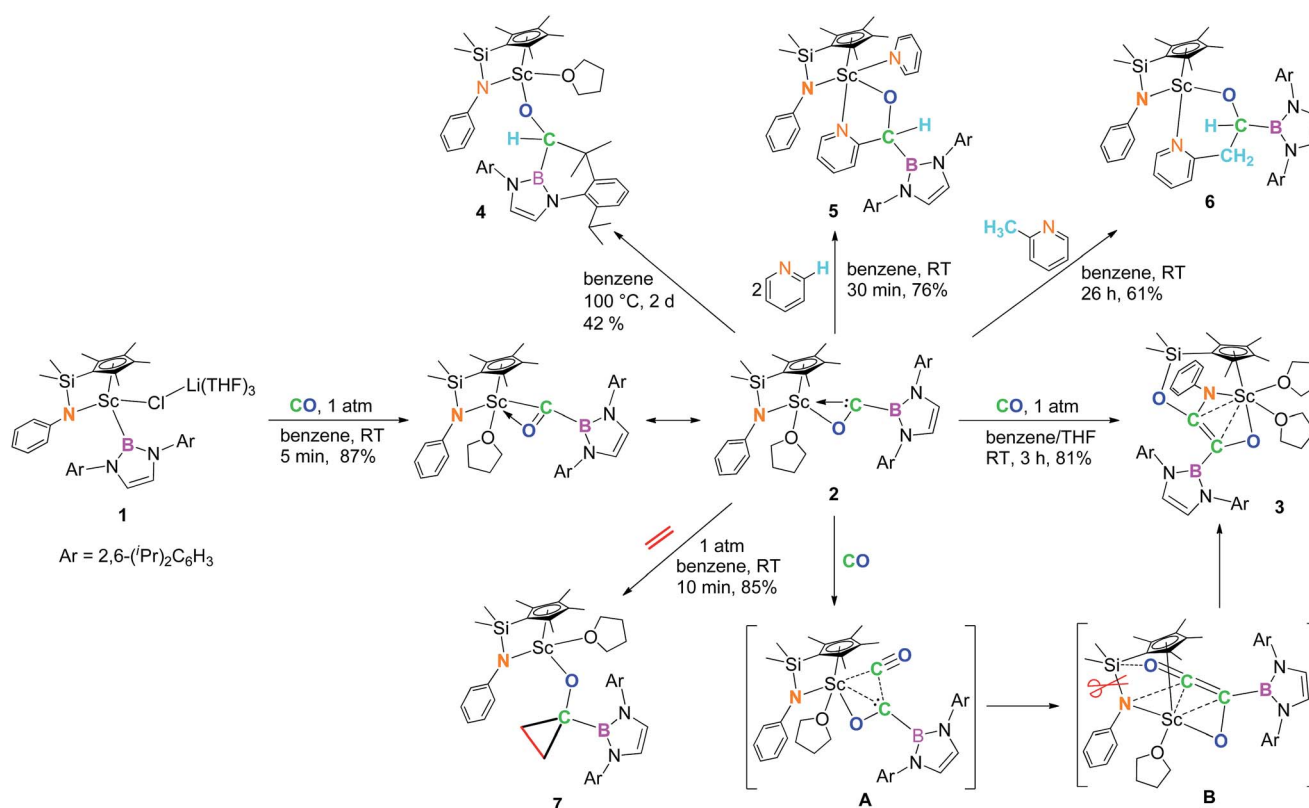


Fig. 1 ORTEP drawing of **2** with thermal ellipsoids at the 30% level except for the 2,6-( $i$ -Pr) $_2\text{C}_6\text{H}_3$  groups in the boryl unit. Hydrogen atoms and the Me groups on the Cp ring have been omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths (Å) and angles ( $^\circ$ ): Sc1–N1 2.130(2), Sc1–O1 2.114(2), Sc1–O2 2.199(2), Sc1–C1 2.194(2), C1–O1 1.266(3), C1–B1 1.577(3); Sc1–C1–O1 69.48(12), Sc1–O1–C1 76.40(12), Sc1–C1–B1 172.11(16).

$\text{OCCH}_2\text{C}(\text{CH}_3)_3\text{Cl}]$  (Th–O 2.37(2) Å, Th–C 2.44(2) Å).<sup>4a</sup> The C1–O1 bond length (1.266(3) Å) in **2** is longer than that in  $[(\text{C}_5\text{Me}_5)_2\text{Th}\{\eta^2\text{-OCCH}_2\text{C}(\text{CH}_3)_3\text{Cl}\}]$  (1.18(3) Å),<sup>4a</sup> suggesting that the  $\eta^2$ -CO unit in **2** is better considered as a carbene moiety than an acyl group.

In order to gain a better understanding about the nature of bonding of the boryl oxycarbene unit in **2**, DFT studies at the M06 level were carried out.<sup>12</sup> The calculated structure showed



Scheme 1 Synthesis and reactivity of the boryl oxycarbene scandium complex **2**.

excellent agreement with the crystallographic structure, especially for the bond lengths of the Sc1–C1 (2.17 Å vs. 2.194(2) Å) and Sc1–O1 (2.12 Å vs. 2.114(2) Å) bonds.

The C1–O1 stretching frequency of **2** is difficult to assign experimentally due to overlapping bands with those of the boryl moiety. The computed C1–O1 stretching frequencies of **2** (1450 cm<sup>−1</sup>) and 2-<sup>13</sup>C (1417 cm<sup>−1</sup>) are comparable with the experimental IR values of the thorium oxycarbene complex [(C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>)<sub>2</sub>Th{η<sup>2</sup>-OCCH<sub>2</sub>C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>}Cl] (1469 cm<sup>−1</sup>) and its <sup>13</sup>CO analogue (1434 cm<sup>−1</sup>), which are lower than those of transition-metal acyl complexes (1523–1666 cm<sup>−1</sup>).<sup>11</sup> Further molecular orbital analysis of **2** suggests significant Sc1–O1 and Sc1–C1 bonding interactions with a minor contribution from the B1-2p orbital (see HOMO–1 in Fig. 2). HOMO–4 indicates π-bonding between C1, B1 and two N atoms of the boryl moiety (Fig. 2). The analysis of the donor–acceptor interactions on the basis of second-order perturbation theory<sup>13</sup> revealed that the donation of σ(B1–C1) to Sc1 (177.7 kcal mol<sup>−1</sup>) is significantly stronger than that of σ(O1–C1) (96.0 kcal mol<sup>−1</sup>), and the donation of lone pair electrons of C1 to a vacant 3d orbital of Sc1 (170.3 kcal mol<sup>−1</sup>) is higher than that of O1 to Sc1 (83.3 kcal mol<sup>−1</sup>). In addition, the donation of the lone pair electrons of N2 (88.8 kcal mol<sup>−1</sup>) and N3 (57.9 kcal mol<sup>−1</sup>) atoms to B1 was also found in the boryl segment. Therefore, The boryl group plays an important role in stabilizing the Sc–(boryl)carbene moiety.

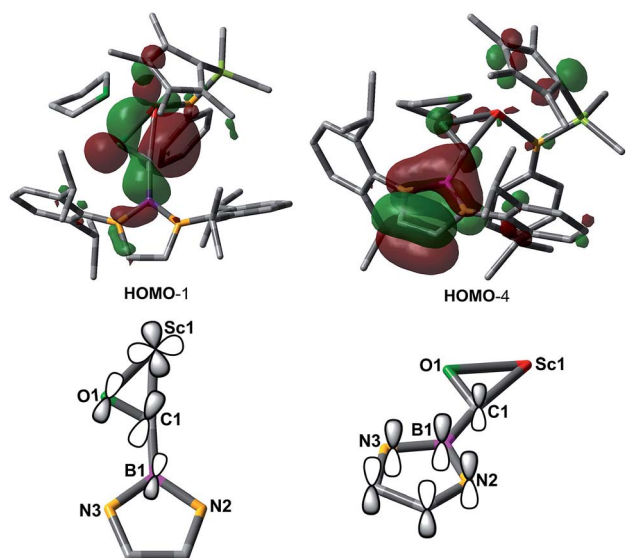
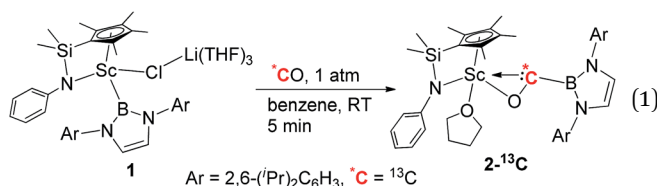


Fig. 2 Selected molecular orbitals for **2** (all H atoms are omitted for clarity).

## Reaction of carbene with CO

When being exposed to CO (1 atm) in a benzene–THF solution at room temperature for 3 h, **2** was completely consumed, and a phenylamido- and boryl-substituted enediolate complex **3** was obtained in 81% yield as yellow crystals after crystallization from a hexane–benzene solution (Scheme 1). An X-ray crystallographic study established that C–C bond formation between the carbene atom in **2** and CO occurred, accompanied by cleavage of the Si–Nph bond and formation of the O2–Si and C2–Nph bonds (Fig. 3). The resulting C1–C2 bond in **3** could be assigned as a double bond (1.364(5) Å), which shows some interactions with the Sc atom (Sc1–C1 2.519(3) Å, Sc1–C2 2.477(3) Å). The two oxygen atoms (O1 and O2) attached to the C1=C2 double bond are *trans* to each other, so are the boryl and PhN groups.

To further confirm the formation of **3**, the <sup>13</sup>C-enriched complexes 3-<sup>13</sup>C, 3-<sup>13</sup>C' and 3-<sup>13</sup>C<sub>2</sub> were synthesized analogously, as shown in eqn (2)–(4). The <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectrum of 3-<sup>13</sup>C<sub>2</sub> in benzene-*d*<sub>6</sub> showed a broad doublet at δ 134.6 and a sharp doublet at δ 136.7 for the OC=CO unit, whilst the <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectra of 3-<sup>13</sup>C and 3-<sup>13</sup>C' gave a singlet at δ 136.7 and δ 134.7, respectively. The <sup>11</sup>B{H} NMR signal of **3** appeared at δ 23.8, which was 6.9 ppm downfield shifted compared to that of **2** (δ 16.9).

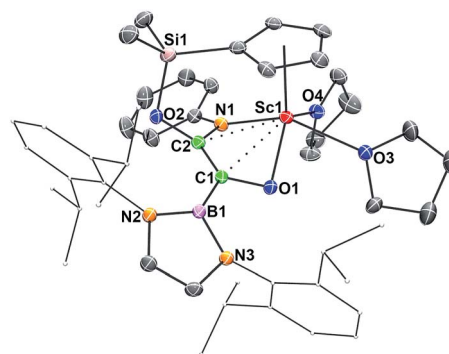
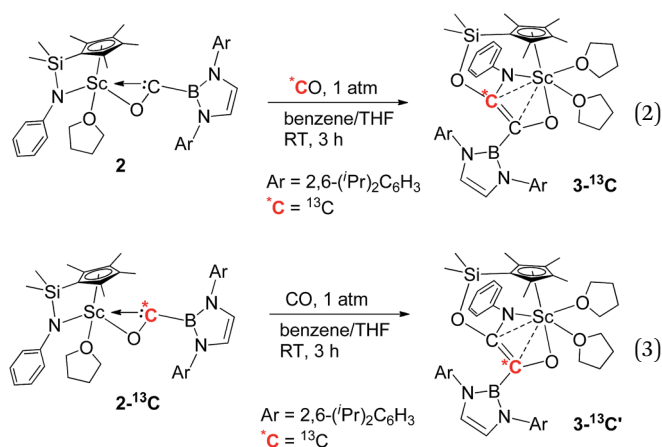
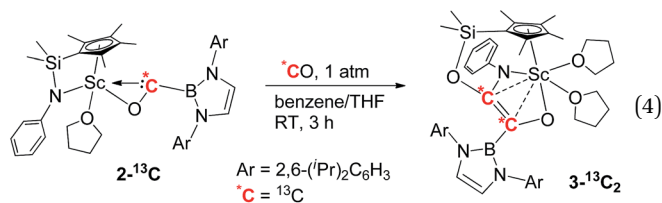


Fig. 3 ORTEP drawing of **3** with thermal ellipsoids at the 30% probability except for the 2,6-(*i*Pr)<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub> groups in the boryl unit. Hydrogen atoms have been omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths (Å): Sc1–N1 2.086(3), Sc1–O1 2.005(2), Sc1–C1 2.519(3), Sc1–C2 2.477(3), Sc1–O3 2.335(3), Sc1–O4 2.291(2), C1–C2 1.364(5), C1–O1 1.383(4), C2–O2 1.390(4), C2–N1 1.405(4), B1–C1 1.567(5), Si1–O2 1.691(2).





The formation of **3** may be achieved by insertion of CO into the Sc–carbene bond in **2** to give a ketene unit,<sup>14a–c</sup> followed by cleavage of the Si–N bond in the Cp–anilido ligand and formation of a Si–O bond and an N–C bond between the resulting silyl and PhN groups and the OCCO unit (*cf.* **A** and **B** in Scheme 1). Silylene-linked Cp–amido ligands have been used for the stabilization of various metal complexes, but examples of cleavage of the Si–N bond in these ligands are scarce.<sup>15</sup> A possible driving force for the present Si–N cleavage could be the formation of stable Si–O and C–N bonds. A similar silyl migration reaction was also observed previously in the reaction of a bis(amidinate)-ligated scandium boryl complex with CO.<sup>9b</sup> The reaction of transition-metal acyl complexes  $[\text{M}-\text{C}(=\text{O})\text{R}]$  with CO were previously reported to give  $\alpha$ -ketoacyl species such as  $[\text{M}-\text{C}(=\text{O})\text{C}(=\text{O})\text{R}]$ .<sup>14d</sup> The reaction of a metallocene cerium hydride complex  $\text{Cp}'_2\text{CeH}$  ( $\text{Cp}' = 1,2,4\text{-}(\text{iBu})_3\text{C}_5\text{H}_2$ ) with CO was reported to yield an enediolate complex  $[\text{Cp}'_2\text{CeOCH}=\text{CHO}\text{Cp}'_2]$  without observation of an isolable mono-CO insertion product.<sup>5f</sup>

### Intra- and intermolecular insertion of carbene into C–H bonds

When complex **2** was heated at 100 °C in benzene for two days, intramolecular insertion of the carbene atom into a methine C–H bond in the boryl ligand took place to give the alkoxide complex **4** (Scheme 1). In this transformation, the Sc–carbene bond is broken, together with formation of a C54–H54 bond and a C54–C41 bond (Fig. 4). The Sc1–O1 bond distance in **4** (1.879(2) Å) is much shorter than that of the Sc–O1(oxy-carbene) bond in **2** (2.114(2) Å), whilst the O1–C54 bond distance in **4** (1.424(4) Å) is much longer than that of the O1–C1(oxy-carbene) bond in **2** (1.266(3) Å). The C–B bond distance in **4** (1.563(5) Å) is comparable with that in **2** (1.577(3) Å). The newly formed C54–C41 (1.561(5) Å) in **4** is best described as a single bond.

The hydrogen atom in the newly formed “HC(O)(B)C” unit in **4** gave a singlet at  $\delta$  3.91 in the  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum in benzene- $d_6$ . The  $^{11}\text{B}\{\text{H}\}$  NMR signal of **4** is located at  $\delta$  21.8, which is comparable to that of **3** ( $\delta$  23.8) and is 4.9 ppm upfield shifted compared to that of **2** ( $\delta$  16.9). The transformation of **2** to **4** could be viewed as a typical reaction (C–H insertion) of a carbene species.<sup>16</sup>

The reaction of **2** with two equivalents of pyridine in benzene- $d_6$  at room temperature yielded **5** as colourless crystals following recrystallization from hexane–benzene (Scheme 1; also see Fig. S1 in ESI†). In this reaction, the insertion of the carbene atom of **2** into an *ortho*-C–H bond of one molecule of pyridine took place, while another molecule of pyridine

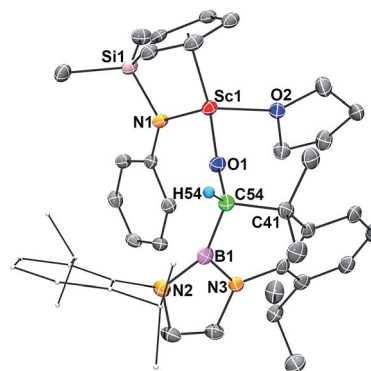


Fig. 4 ORTEP drawing of **4** with thermal ellipsoids at the 30% level except for a 2,6- $(\text{iPr})_2\text{C}_6\text{H}_3$  group in the boryl unit. Hydrogen atoms (except H54) and the Me groups on the Cp ring have been omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths (Å) and angles (°): Sc1–O1 1.879(2), Sc1–O2 2.184(2), C54–O1 1.424(4), C41–C54 1.561(5), O1–C54 1.424(4), B1–C54 1.563(5); Sc1–O1–C54 169.5(2), B1–C54–O1 111.3(3), C41–C54–O1 110.3(3).

displaced the THF ligand of **2**. The  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of the newly formed “HC(O)(Py)B” fragment in **5** showed a singlet at  $\delta$  5.75 in benzene- $d_6$ . The  $^{11}\text{B}\{\text{H}\}$  NMR spectrum of **5** showed a broad peak at  $\delta$  25.1 which is close to that of **3** ( $\delta$  23.8).

When **2** was allowed to react with 2-methylpyridine in benzene- $d_6$  at room temperature for 26 h, the insertion of a  $\text{sp}^3$  C–H bond in the methyl group of 2-methylpyridine occurred to give complex **6** in 61% isolated yield (Scheme 1 and Fig. 5). The  $^1\text{H}$  NMR signals of the two protons on the resulting O–CH(B)–CH<sub>2</sub>C<sub>5</sub>H<sub>4</sub>N moiety appeared at  $\delta$  2.74 (dd, 10.6 Hz, 14.6 Hz) and  $\delta$  2.95 (d, 14.6 Hz), whilst the one of O–CH(B)–CH<sub>2</sub>C<sub>5</sub>H<sub>4</sub>N appeared at  $\delta$  4.50 (d, 10.6 Hz).

The molecular structures of **5** and **6** were also confirmed by X-ray crystallographic studies (Fig. S1† for **5** and Fig. 5 for **6**), although there were disorder problems in the case of **5**. The present C–H bond activation of pyridines by **2** is in contrast with what was observed previously in the reaction of conventional free carbene species with pyridines, in which a stable carbene–pyridine ylide complex was usually formed.<sup>17</sup> The reason for the formation of the C–H activation products **5** and **6** is possibly because of facile coordination of the nitrogen atom of a pyridine unit to the electropositive Sc<sup>3+</sup> centre, which could easily lead to activation of an *ortho*-C(sp<sup>2</sup>)–H or methyl C(sp<sup>3</sup>)–H bond by the highly active carbene species.<sup>18,5g</sup> *ortho*-C–H activation of pyridine by a tantalum  $\eta^2$ -acyl complex was reported previously.<sup>6a</sup>

### Cyclopropanation of carbene with ethylene

The reaction of **2** with ethylene (1 atm) in benzene- $d_6$  took place rapidly at room temperature, which was accompanied by a colour change from dark blue to colourless to give a borylcyclopropyloxy product **7** *via* the cycloaddition of the carbene atom to ethylene (Scheme 1). The Sc–O<sub>CO</sub> bond distance in **7** (1.9083(14) Å) (Fig. 6) is comparable with that in **6** (1.9175(12) Å), as are the C–O<sub>CO</sub> bond distances (**7**: 1.402(2) Å; **6**: 1.412(2) Å). The bond distances and angles of the





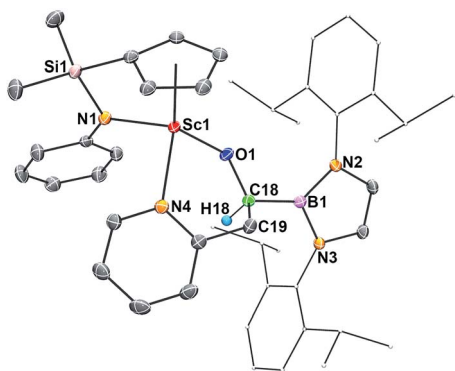


Fig. 5 ORTEP drawing of **6** with thermal ellipsoids at the 30% level except for a 2,6-(*i*-Pr)<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub> group in the boryl unit. Hydrogen atoms (except H18) and the Me groups on the Cp ring have been omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths (Å): Sc1–O1 1.9175(12), Sc1–N1 2.0947(15), Sc1–N4 2.2811(15), O1–C18 1.412(2), C18–C19 1.550(2), B1–C18 1.595(3).

triangular carbon skeleton in **6** are typical for a cyclopropyl unit (Fig. 6).

The present formation of **7** represents a rare example of cyclopropanation of ethylene with a carbene species.<sup>19</sup> It was known that carbenes could undergo cyclopropanation reactions with alkenes bearing polar substituents (either electron withdrawing or donating) but are usually inert towards simple alkenes such as ethylene.<sup>19</sup> The cyclopropanation of ethylene with **2** may be promoted by coordination of ethylene to the electropositive Sc<sup>3+</sup> center.<sup>20</sup> The cyclopropanation of a cationic iron carbene complex [ $\{\text{Cp}(\text{CO})_2\text{Fe}=\text{CHC}_6\text{H}_5\}^+\{\text{PF}_6\}^-$ ] with ethylene was reported previously.<sup>19a</sup> The reaction of a classical acyl species  $\text{M}-\text{C}(=\text{O})\text{R}$  with ethylene usually gave a straightforward insertion product formulated as  $[\text{M}-\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{C}(=\text{O})\text{R}]$ .<sup>21</sup>

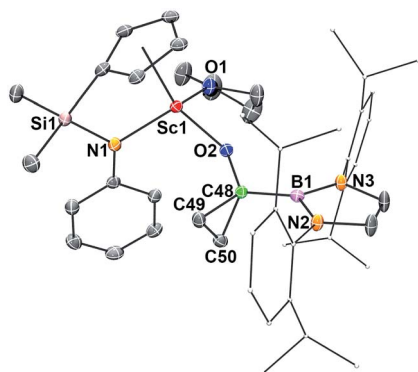


Fig. 6 ORTEP drawing of **7** with thermal ellipsoids at the 30% level except for the 2,6-(*i*-Pr)<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub> groups in the boryl unit. Hydrogen atoms and the Me groups on the Cp ring have been omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths (Å) and angles (°): Sc1–N1 2.1238(18), Sc1–O1 2.1577(15), Sc1–O2 1.9083(14), O2–C48 1.402(2), C48–C49 1.514(3), C48–C50 1.533(3), C49–C50 1.492(3), C48–B1 1.569(3), C49–C48–C50 58.64(14), C50–C49–C48 61.33(14), C49–C50–C48 60.02(14).

## Conclusions

We have demonstrated that the reaction of a half-sandwich scandium boryl complex such as **1** with CO (1 atm) can afford a structurally characterizable oxycarbene complex including **2**, which represents the first example of a well-defined boryl-substituted oxycarbene species. The scandium boryl oxycarbene complex **2** showed diverse reactivity, such as coupling with CO to form an enediolate complex **3**, intramolecular C–H bond activation to give **4**, insertion of the carbene atom into an *ortho*-C–H bond of pyridine or into a methyl C–H bond of 2-methylpyridine, and cyclopropanation with ethylene. The structure and reactivity of the carbene species in **2** are clearly affected by the scandium ion as well as the boryl substituent. Studies on the synthesis and reactions of other rare earth metal boryl complexes are in progress.

## Acknowledgements

We appreciate financial support through a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B) (24350030) and a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (S) (26220802) from JSPS and grants from the National Natural Science Foundation of China (21174023, 21137001 and 21429201). We thank Mrs Akiko Karube for micro-elemental analyses.

## Notes and references

- (a) C. K. Rofer-Depoorter, *Chem. Rev.*, 1981, **81**, 447; (b) A. Y. Khodakov, W. Chu and P. Fongarland, *Chem. Rev.*, 2007, **107**, 1692.
- (a) K. Tatsumi, A. Nakamura, P. Hofmann, P. Stauffert and R. Hoffmann, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1985, **107**, 4440; (b) W. J. Evans, J. W. Grate and R. J. Doedens, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1985, **107**, 1671; (c) M. D. Curtis, K. B. Shiu and W. M. Butler, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1986, **108**, 1550; (d) J. B. Sheridan, J. R. Johnson, B. M. Handwerker, G. L. Geoffroy and A. L. Rheingold, *Organometallics*, 1988, **7**, 2404; (e) I. M. Arafa, K. Shin and H. M. Goff, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1988, **110**, 5228; (f) J. W. Bruno, M. C. Fermin, S. E. Halfon and G. K. Schulte, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1989, **111**, 8738; (g) J. D. Debad, P. Legzdins, R. J. Batchelor and F. W. B. Einstein, *Organometallics*, 1993, **12**, 2094; (h) M. Gomez, P. Gomez-Sal, G. Jimenez, A. Martin, P. Royo and J. Sanchez-Nieves, *Organometallics*, 1996, **15**, 3579; (i) H. Shen and R. F. Jordan, *Organometallics*, 2003, **22**, 2080; (j) W. J. Evans, S. A. Kozimor, G. W. Nyce and J. W. Ziller, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2003, **125**, 13831; (k) M. L. Scheuermann, A. L. Rheingold and B. S. Williams, *Organometallics*, 2009, **28**, 1613; (l) O. Benaud, J. C. Berthet, P. Thuery and M. Ephritikhine, *Inorg. Chem.*, 2010, **49**, 8117; (m) J. L. Smeltz, P. D. Boyle and E. A. Ison, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2011, **133**, 13288.
- (a) P. T. Wolczanski and J. E. Bercaw, *Acc. Chem. Res.*, 1980, **13**, 121; (b) T. J. Marks, *Science*, 1982, **217**, 989; (c) L. D. Durfee and I. P. Rothwell, *Chem. Rev.*, 1988, **88**, 1059; (d) B. E. Kahn and R. D. Rieke, *Chem. Rev.*, 1988, **88**, 733.



- 4 (a) P. J. Fagan, J. M. Manriquez, T. J. Marks, V. W. Day, S. H. Vollmer and C. S. Day, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1980, **102**, 5393; (b) E. A. Maatta and T. J. Marks, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1981, **103**, 3576; (c) P. J. Fagan, K. G. Moloy and T. J. Marks, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1981, **103**, 6959; (d) P. J. Fagan, J. M. Manriquez, S. H. Vollmer, C. S. Day, V. W. Day and T. J. Marks, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1981, **103**, 2206; (e) K. G. Moloy, T. J. Marks and V. W. Day, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1983, **105**, 5696; (f) K. G. Moloy and T. J. Marks, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1984, **106**, 7051; (g) K. G. Moloy, P. J. Fagan, J. M. Manriquez and T. J. Marks, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1986, **108**, 56.
- 5 (a) W. J. Evans, A. L. Wayda, W. E. Hunter and J. L. Atwood, *J. Chem. Soc., Chem. Commun.*, 1981, 706; (b) K. Tatsumi, A. Nakamura, P. Hofmann, R. Hoffmann, K. G. Moloy and T. J. Marks, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1986, **108**, 4467; (c) W. J. Evans and D. K. Drummond, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1988, **110**, 2772; (d) W. J. Evans, K. J. Forrestal and J. W. Ziller, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1995, **117**, 12635; (e) C. J. Schaverien, N. Meijboom and A. G. Orpen, *J. Chem. Soc., Chem. Commun.*, 1992, 124; (f) B. K. Campion, R. H. Heyn and T. D. Tilley, *Organometallics*, 1993, **12**, 2584; (g) B. J. Deelman, W. M. Stevels, J. H. Teuben, M. T. Lakin and A. L. Spek, *Organometallics*, 1994, **13**, 3881; (h) L. Lee, D. J. Berg, F. W. Einstein and R. J. Batchelor, *Organometallics*, 1997, **16**, 1819; (i) G. M. Ferrence, R. McDonald and J. Takats, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 1999, **38**, 2233; (j) T. M. Cameron, J. C. Gordon, B. L. Scott and W. Tumas, *Chem. Commun.*, 2004, 1398; (k) T. Shima and Z. Hou, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2006, **128**, 8124; (l) E. L. Werkema, L. Maron, O. Eisenstein and R. A. Andersen, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2007, **129**, 6662.
- 6 (a) J. Arnold and T. D. Tilley, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1985, **107**, 6409; (b) T. D. Tilley, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1985, **107**, 4084; (c) J. Arnold, T. D. Tilley, A. L. Rheingold, S. J. Geib and A. M. Arif, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1989, **111**, 149; (d) P. J. Fagan, J. M. Manriquez, S. H. Vollmer, C. S. Day, V. W. Day and T. J. Marks, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1981, **103**, 2206; (e) P. L. Arnold, Z. R. Turner, R. M. Bellabarba and R. P. Tooze, *Chem. Sci.*, 2011, **2**, 77; (f) M. Porchia, N. Brianese, F. Ossola, G. Rossetto and P. Zanella, *J. Chem. Soc., Dalton Trans.*, 1987, 691.
- 7 (a) G. J. Irvine, M. J. Lesley, T. B. Marder, N. C. Norman, C. R. Rice, E. G. Robins, W. R. Roper, G. R. Whittell and L. J. Wright, *Chem. Rev.*, 1998, **98**, 2685; (b) S. Aldridge and D. L. Coombs, *Coord. Chem. Rev.*, 2004, **248**, 535; (c) L. Dang, Z. Lin and T. B. Marder, *Chem. Commun.*, 2009, 3987; (d) H. Braunschweig, R. D. Dewhurst and A. Schneider, *Chem. Rev.*, 2010, **110**, 3924; (e) I. A. Mkhalid, J. H. Barnard, T. B. Marder, J. M. Murphy and J. F. Hartwig, *Chem. Rev.*, 2010, **110**, 890; (f) J. Cid, H. Gulyas, J. J. Carbo and E. Fernandez, *Chem. Soc. Rev.*, 2012, **41**, 3558; (g) J. F. Hartwig, *Acc. Chem. Res.*, 2012, **45**, 864; (h) J. Cid, J. J. Carbo and E. Fernandez, *Chem.-Eur. J.*, 2012, **18**, 12794.
- 8 (a) Y. Segawa, M. Yamashita and K. Nozaki, *Science*, 2006, **314**, 113; (b) T. B. Marder, *Science*, 2006, **314**, 69; (c) H. Braunschweig, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2007, **46**, 1946; (d) M. Yamashita, Y. Suzuki, Y. Segawa and K. Nozaki, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2007, **129**, 9570; (e) Y. Segawa, Y. Suzuki, M. Yamashita and K. Nozaki, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2008, **130**, 16069; (f) L. Weber, *Eur. J. Inorg. Chem.*, 2012, 5595; (g) A. V. Protchenko, K. H. Birj Kumar, D. Dange, A. D. Schwarz, D. Vidovic, C. Jones, N. Kaltsoyannis, P. Mountford and S. Aldridge, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2012, **134**, 6500; (h) N. Dettenrieder, H. M. Dietrich, C. Schadle, C. M. Mossmer, K. W. Tornroos and R. Anwender, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2012, **51**, 4461; (i) N. Dettenrieder, C. Schadle, C. Mossmer, P. Sirsch and R. Anwender, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2014, **136**, 886; (j) R. T. Baker, D. W. Ovenall, J. C. Calabrese, S. A. Westcott, N. J. Taylor, I. D. Williams and T. B. Marder, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1990, **112**, 9399; (k) K. M. Waltz and J. F. Hartwig, *Science*, 1997, **277**, 211; (l) Y. Segawa, M. Yamashita and K. Nozaki, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2007, **46**, 6710; (m) T. Kajiwar, T. Terabayashi, M. Yamashita and K. Nozaki, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2008, **47**, 6606; (n) Y. Segawa, M. Yamashita and K. Nozaki, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2009, **131**, 9201; (o) T. Terabayashi, T. Kajiwar, M. Yamashita and K. Nozaki, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2009, **131**, 14162; (p) Y. Okuno, M. Yamashita and K. Nozaki, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2011, **50**, 920.
- 9 (a) L. M. Saleh, K. H. Birj Kumar, A. V. Protchenko, A. D. Schwarz, S. Aldridge, C. Jones, N. Kaltsoyannis and P. Mountford, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2011, **133**, 3836; (b) S. Li, J. Cheng, Y. Chen, M. Nishiura and Z. Hou, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2011, **50**, 6360; (c) B. Wang, M. Nishiura, J. Cheng and Z. Hou, *Dalton Trans.*, 2014, 14215.
- 10 (a) R. Frank, J. Howell, R. Tirfoin, D. Dange, C. Jones, D. M. P. Mingos and S. Aldridge, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2014, **136**, 15730; (b) R. Frank, J. Howell, J. Campos, R. Tirfoin, N. Phillips, S. Zahn, D. M. P. Mingos and S. Aldridge, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2015, **54**, 9586; (c) H. Braunschweig, M. Koster and K. W. Klinkhammer, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 1999, **38**, 2229; (d) H. Braunschweig, C. Kollann, M. Koster, U. Englert and M. Muller, *Eur. J. Inorg. Chem.*, 1999, 2277; (e) H. Braunschweig, K. W. Klinkhammer, M. Koster and K. Radacki, *Chem.-Eur. J.*, 2003, **9**, 1303.
- 11 (a) E. J. M. Deboer, L. C. T. Cate, A. G. J. Staring and J. H. Teuben, *J. Organomet. Chem.*, 1979, **181**, 61; (b) J. Jeffery, M. F. Lappert, N. T. Luongthi, M. Webb, J. L. Atwood and W. E. Hunter, *J. Chem. Soc., Dalton Trans.*, 1981, 1593; (c) Z. Y. Guo, D. C. Swenson, A. S. Guram and R. F. Jordan, *Organometallics*, 1994, **13**, 766; (d) J. Vicente, M. T. Chicote, A. J. Martinez-Martinez, A. Abellan-Lopez and D. Bautista, *Organometallics*, 2010, **29**, 5693; (e) D. F. Chen, R. Scopelliti and X. L. Hu, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2010, **132**, 928.
- 12 DFT-M06: Y. Zhao and D. G. Truhlar, *Theor. Chem. Acc.*, 2008, **120**, 215.
- 13 F. Lavigne, E. Maerten, G. Alcaraz, N. Saffon-Merceron, C. Acosta-Silva, V. Branchadell and A. Baceiredo, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2010, **132**, 8864.
- 14 (a) W. A. Herrmann, J. Plank, M. L. Ziegler and K. Weidenhammer, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1979, **101**, 3133; (b)



- W. Sander, G. Bucher and S. Wierlacher, *Chem. Rev.*, 1993, **93**, 1583; (c) V. Lavallo, Y. Canac, B. Donnadieu, W. W. Schoeller and G. Bertrand, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2006, **45**, 3488; (d) G. L. Geoffroy, J. B. Sheridan, S. L. Bassner and C. Kelley, *Pure Appl. Chem.*, 1989, **61**, 1723.
- 15 The Si–N bond cleavage of  $[\text{Me}_2\text{Si}(\text{C}_5\text{Me}_4)(\text{NPh})\text{M}(\text{NMe}_2)_3]$  (M = Nb, Ta) by photo-irradiation was reported: W. A. Herrmann and W. Baratta, *J. Organomet. Chem.*, 1996, **506**, 357.
- 16 (a) S. K. Zhao, C. Knors and P. Helquist, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1989, **111**, 8527; (b) H. M. L. Davies and T. Hansen, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1997, **119**, 9075; (c) J. L. Wood, B. M. Stoltz, H. J. Dietrich, D. A. Pflum and D. T. Petsch, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1997, **119**, 9641; (d) R. D. Haszeldine and J. G. Speight, *Chem. Commun.*, 1967, 995; (e) R. N. Haszeldine, R. Rowland, J. G. Speight and A. E. Tipping, *J. Chem. Soc., Perkin Trans. 1*, 1979, 1943.
- 17 (a) J. E. Jackson, N. Soundararajan, M. S. Platz and M. T. H. Liu, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1988, **110**, 5595; (b) C. S. Ge, E. G. Jang, E. A. Jefferson, W. G. Liu, R. A. Moss, J. Wlostowska and S. Xue, *J. Chem. Soc., Chem. Commun.*, 1994, 1479; (c) A. Kuhn, C. Plug and C. Wentrup, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2000, **122**, 1945.
- 18 For examples of C–H activation of pyridines by rare-earth alkyl complexes, see: (a) B. Guan and Z. Hou, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2011, **133**, 18086; (b) B. Guan, B. Wang, M. Nishiura and Z. Hou, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2013, **52**, 4418; (c) G. Song, W. O and Z. Hou, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2014, **136**, 12209.
- 19 (a) M. Brookhart, M. B. Humphrey, H. J. Kratzer and G. O. Nelson, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1980, **102**, 7802; (b) M. Brookhart, D. Timmers, J. R. Tucker, G. D. Williams, G. R. Husk, H. Brunner and B. Hammer, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1983, **105**, 6721; (c) M. Brookhart and W. B. Studabaker, *Chem. Rev.*, 1987, **87**, 411; (d) D. F. Harvey and D. M. Sigano, *Chem. Rev.*, 1996, **96**, 271; (e) C. K. Murray, D. C. Yang and W. D. Wulff, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1990, **112**, 5660; (f) J. Pfeiffer and K. H. Dotz, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 1997, **36**, 2828; (g) J. Pfeiffer, M. Nieger and K. H. Dotz, *Eur. J. Org. Chem.*, 1998, 1011.
- 20 For examples of reactions of alkenes with scandium alkyls, see: (a) M. Nishiura and Z. Hou, *Nat. Chem.*, 2010, **2**, 257; (b) M. Nishiura, F. Guo and Z. Hou, *Acc. Chem. Res.*, 2015, **48**, 2209.
- 21 P. Braunstein, C. Frison and X. Morise, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2000, **39**, 2867.

