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C-H and H-H activation at a di-titanium centre[†]‡

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The reaction of the bis(pentalene)dititanium complex $Ti_2(\mu:\eta^5,\eta^5-Pn^{\dagger})_2$ $(Pn^{\dagger} = C_8H_4(1,4-Si^{\dagger}Pr_3)_2)$ with the N-heterocyclic carbene 1,3,4,5tetramethylimidazol-2-ylidene results in intramolecular C-H activation of one of the $^{\mathrm{i}}\mathrm{Pr}$ methyl groups of a Pn^{\dagger} ligand and formation of a "tucked-in" bridging hydride complex. The "tuck-in" process is reversed by the addition of hydrogen, which yields a dihydride featuring terminal and bridging hydrides.

Group IV metallocene chemistry has been instrumental in the development of organometallic chemistry,¹ elucidating fundamental aspects of bonding² and reactivity,³ especially via the synthesis, isolation and study of low valent metallocene complexes.^{1,4} In this context, the synthesis and isolation of such complexes bearing hydride ligands has been important;⁵ for example, such low or mixed valence hydride complexes have been shown to promote or be involved in the fixation of N₂ to NH₃.⁶ In this communication, we present the first examples of the synthesis of bridging titanium hydrides under non-reducing conditions, via the reaction of bis(pentalene)dititanium complex $Ti_2(\mu;\eta^5,\eta^5-Pn^{\dagger})_2$ (Pn^{\dagger} = $C_8H_4(1,4-Si^iPr_3)_2$ with an N-heterocyclic carbene and subsequent hydrogenolysis.

We have previously reported on the reactivity of $Ti_2(\mu;\eta^5,\eta^5)$ - Pn^{\dagger}_{2} ($Pn^{\dagger} = C_8H_4(1,4-Si^iPr_3)_2$) (1) towards a variety of small molecules and π -acceptor ligands.⁷ In order to gain a better insight into the reactivity of (1), we decided to study its interaction with strong σ -donor ligands. When (1) was treated with an excess of PMe3 no reaction was observed. However, addition of 1,3,4,5-tetramethylimidazol-2-ylidene (2) to (1) in toluene at 0 °C resulted in an immediate colour change from crimson red to a dark pine green (Scheme 1).

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The formulation of the new complex (3) as a "tucked-in" hydride resulting from C-H activation of one of the ⁱPr methyl groups of a Pn[†] induced by addition of the strongly donating NHC (2) was initially confirmed by NMR. In particular, the ¹H-NMR spectrum showed two inequivalent pentalene ring environments, a sharp singlet at -7.91 ppm for the bridging hydride (T₁ 479 ms), with one of the diastereotopic protons of the "tucked-in" CH2 group appearing as an overlapping dd at -2.91 ppm whilst the other was largely obscured by the complex aliphatic region of the spectrum at ca 1.37 ppm; the coordination of the NHC was confirmed by the observation of a peak at 197.78 ppm in the ¹³C¹H-NMR spectrum.

The structure of (3) was confirmed by X-ray diffraction and is shown in Fig. 1. The NHC coordinates to one of the Ti centres (Ti2 in Fig. 1), while one of the methyl groups on a TIPS substituent has been cyclometallated on the other Ti centre (Ti1 in Fig. 1) with concurrent formation of a bridging hydride.⁸ The Ti-Ti bond has been retained but lengthened to 2.5610(8) Å (from 2.399(2) Å in $(1)^{7e}$) and is typical of a single bond. The Ti-C(carbene) bond (2.300(2) Å; Ti2-C1 in Fig. 1) is within the range of 2.2-2.35 Å reported for other Ti-NHC complexes.9 The Ti-H bond lengths (*i.e.* Ti2-H1: 1.72(3) Å, Ti1-H1: 1.79(3) Å) are identical within esd's and are similar to previously reported monomeric¹⁰ and dimeric^{6d,6b,11} titanium hydrides as well as Ti(III) alumino-¹² and borohydrides¹³ (1.7–1.9 Å), although it has to be noted that, probably due to the topology of the hydride ligand in (3), these Ti-H bond distances fall at the shorter end of the known range. Due to this unique topology, the Ti-H-Ti bond angle $(93.4(13)^\circ)$ approaches a right angle and is the most acute ever observed in dimeric titanium hydrides.^{6b,6d,11}



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[‡] Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: Full experimental and computational details, and X-ray data. CCDC 1577130-1577132. For ESI and crystallographic data in CIF or other electronic format see DOI: 10.1039/c7cc07726b



Scheme 1 Synthesis of a new syn-bimetallic hydride titanium cluster.

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[†] Dedicated to Phil on the occasion of his 65th birthday- Lá Breithe Sona!



Fig. 1 ORTEP diagram of the molecular structure of (3) displaying 50% probability ellipsoids. ⁱPr groups omitted for clarity.

It is also worth noting that the addition of (2) to (1) results in the formal oxidation of the two Ti centres (*i.e.* from +2 to +3), and employing the CBC model each Ti has a count of 18 e (16 e in (1)).¹⁴

With a view to synthesising a new hydride derivative via σ -bond metathesis of the Ti-CH₂ bond in (3) with dihydrogen, 2 bar of H_2 was added to a C_7D_8 solution of (3) in an NMR tube This indeed resulted in clean conversion of (3) (100% spectroscopic yield) to a new complex (4) (Scheme 2).

Compared to the ¹H NMR spectrum of (3), (4) displays a new, broader hydride peak ($\Delta \nu_{1/2}$ = 29 Hz) at -8.82 ppm at room temperature, whilst the signal for the "tucked-in CH₂ group has disappeared completely; the NHC is still coordinated (¹³C{¹H} δ 198.27 ppm). Removal of the H₂ overpressure by freeze-thawdegassing showed that (4) is persistent in solution, although some regeneration of (3) was observed (Scheme 2). Addition of H_2 to a solution of (3), *via* a Toepler pump, showed that for the conversion of (3) to (4) to occur quickly (minutes) 5 eq of H_2 are required (when 1-2 equivalents of H₂ were added, complete conversion to (4) occurred after ca. 1 week). The rate of reaction was also found to be pressure dependent: when (3) was exposed to an atmosphere of 10% H₂ in N₂ at 1.5 bar but in an amount corresponding to only 1 equivalent of H₂ the reaction was again complete in minutes.

Variable temperature ¹H NMR studies showed that the broad hydride peak at -8.82 ppm in (4) becomes fully resolved into a doublet at 0 °C (with no further change below that temperature and down to -70 °C) with a T₁ of 310 ms, with the concomitent appearance of a second doublet centred at 2.17 ppm (T_1 336 ms), which is too broad to be observable at room temperature (Fig. 2); these two signals are related by a coupling constant of $J_{\rm HH}$ = 11 Hz. EXSY spectroscopy (in both



Scheme 2 Hydrogenolysis of (3) to afford (4)



Fig. 2 Hydride peaks in (4) at RT (blue) and at 0 °C (black)

the presence and absence of an H_2 overpressure) confirmed that these two protons exchange at 30 °C while at 0 °C the process is quenched. Thus the peak at -8.82 ppm is assigned to the bridging hydride in (4) and that at 2.17 ppm to the terminal one (Scheme 2).

Initial attempts to crystallise (4) by standard methods (*i.e.* removal of volatiles and recrystallisation) were frustrated by the preferential isolation of crystalline (3) (as it is less soluble than (4)) with the mother liquor consisting of a mixture of (3) and (4)(ca. 20:80 by NMR), due to the partial reversibility of the reaction. However, the solid state molecular structure^{8,15} of (4) (Fig. 3) was eventually determined from single crystals grown by cooling slowly a freshly prepared solution of (4) at -78 °C under an overpressure (1.5 atm) of H₂, and confirms the spectroscopic assignment.

The Ti-C(carbene) bond length in (4) is 2.291(4) Å and is identical to that found in (3). On the other hand, the Ti-Ti bond is slightly shortened in (4) from 2.5610(8) Å in (3) to 2.5413(8) Å possibly due to the negligible steric requirements of the terminal hydride ligand. The Ti-H(bridging) bond distances (Ti1-H1 = 1.84(5) Å; Ti2-H1 = 1.79(5) Å) in (4) are similar within esd's and compare with the ones found in (3); the same applies to the Ti-H(terminal) (*i.e.* Ti2-H2 = 1.74(4) Å in Fig. 2) bond length. The Ti1-H1-Ti2 bond angle in (4) again approaches 90° (89(2)°) and is very similar to that found in (3).

When (3) was treated with an excess of D_2 (5 eq.), the formation of (4-D) was observed, but deuterium was found to be only incorporated in the hydridic positions, and not in the new Me group derived from the previously "tucked-in" CH₂ group (confirmed by ²H-NMR, DEPT-135 and gHSQC). Hence the reaction of (3) with H₂ to form (4)



Fig. 3 ORTEP diagram of the molecular structure of (4) displaying 50% probability ellipsoids. ⁱPr groups omitted for clarity

Table 1 Electronic binding energies (ΔE) and Gibbs energy changes (ΔG) for the reaction Ti₂Pn₂ + NHC = Ti₂Pn₂NHC

Ti pentalene dimer	NHC	ΔE (eV)	$\Delta G^{a} (\text{kJ mol}^{-1})$	Ti–Ti–C (°)
$ \begin{array}{c} Ti_2(C_8H_6)_2 \\ Ti_2(C_8H_6)_2 \\ Ti_2Pn^{\dagger}_2 \end{array} $	$\begin{array}{c} C_3H_4N_2\\ C_3Me_4N_2\\ C_3Me_4N_2 \end{array}$	$-1.31 \\ -1.26 \\ -0.48$	-66 -65 +21	100 114 127

^{*a*} Calculations are on gas phase species which leads to an overestimation of the entropy change when there is a change in the number of species.

does not go *via* σ -bond metathesis (which would lead to D incorporation in the Me group in the reaction with D₂). Hence the formation of (4) (and also (3)) was probed computationally (ADF:BP/TZP: details are given in the ESI‡). Preliminary studies suggested that sterics were important in determining the reaction energies. For example energy of binding an NHC to a Ti₂Pn₂ dimer depended critically on the substituents. Introduction of the methyl substituents on the NHC made very little difference to its binding energy but the bulky SiⁱPr₃ substituents on the pentalene ligands increased the Ti–Ti–C angle forcing the NHC to a less favourable binding position thus decreasing the binding energy significantly (Table 1).

The degree to which the tuck-in reaction was favoured in the absence of an NHC was also investigated. The formation of $\text{Ti}_2\text{Pn}^{\dagger}(\text{Pn}^{\dagger}-\text{H})(\mu-\text{H})$ from $\text{Ti}_2\text{Pn}^{\dagger}_2$ was calculated to have $\Delta E = -0.03$ eV and $\Delta G = 11$ kJ mol⁻¹. However, the energies of the observed tuck-in reaction with the methylated NHC present were calculated to be $\Delta E = -0.69$ eV and $\Delta G = 9$ kJ mol⁻¹. Thus the presence of the base improves the energetics of the tuck-in reaction. The significant entropy disadvantage in the gas phase would be lessened in solution.

The HOMO of 3 (Fig. 4) shows a Ti–Ti σ -bond. The calculated Ti–Ti distance is 2.56 Å in excellent agreement with experiment. The Ti–H distances are 1.83 Å and the angle at the bridging hydrogen 89°. Such discrepancies from the experimental values are not unusual when comparing distances to bound hydrogen between theory and X-ray diffraction experiments.



Fig. 4 Isosurface for the HOMO of 3.



Fig. 5 Structure of the calculated transition state for H_2 addition. The reacting Hs are highlighted.

Addition of H₂ to 3 to form 4 is calculated to have reaction energies $\Delta E = -0.77$ eV and $\Delta G = -31$ kJ mol⁻¹. The calculated Ti–Ti distance for 4 is 2.54 Å reproducing the shortening from 3 found experimentally. The Ti–H(terminal) distance is 1.74 Å, the Ti–H(bridging) distances 1.81 and 1.82 Å and the Ti–H–Ti angle unchanged at 89°.

A transition state for this reaction was modelled using just one Si^iPr_3 substituent on one of the pentalene ligands and C_3H_4N as the NHC for computational efficiency. The free energy of activation was estimated as 84 kJ mol⁻¹ for such a system. The transition state structure is shown in Fig. 5.

The Ti distance to the previously bridging H is 3.53 Å and the Ti distances to the reacting H₂ are 2.74 and 3.24 Å, the H–H distance being 0.76 Å. Such a geometry indicates that the tuckin process is reversed before complete H₂ addition, consistent with the lack of deuterium incorporation into ⁱPr groups and the conclusion that σ bond metathesis is not in play. It may be that the steric compression induced by the mere approach of the H₂ molecule is sufficient to reverse the tuck-in process, an idea given some credence by the pressure dependence of the reaction of (3) with H₂ (*vide infra*).

In conclusion, we have described the facile preparation of the first example of a *syn*-bimetallic Ti complex (3) featuring a bridging hydride, originating from the C–H activation of a ⁱPr substituent induced by addition of the strong Lewis base 1,3,4,5tetramethylimidazol-2-ylidene. Preliminary studies show that this transformation is also effected by other, effectively "planar" Lewis bases, *e.g.* dimethylaminopyridine (DMAP). The resultant C–H activation product (3) readily reacts with an excess of H₂ to produce very cleanly a unique *syn*-bimetallic di-hydride complex (4) featuring bridging and terminal hydride ligands. Labelling experiments and computational studies strongly suggest that the latter reaction does not proceed *via* a σ -bond metathesis mechanism.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

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