Synthesis of unsymmetrical B$_2$E$_2$ and B$_2$E$_3$ heterocycles by borylene insertion into boradichalcogeniranes†

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We report the selective insertion of a range of borylene fragments into the E–E bonds (E = S, Se, Te) of cyclic boron dichalcogenides. This method provides facile synthetic access to a variety of symmetrical and unsymmetrical four- and five-membered rings.

Introduction

1,3-Dithietanes$^{4}$ – four-membered [C$_2$S$_2$] cyclic molecules – comprise a scarce class of compounds. This, however, is at odds with the fact that the cyclic 1,3-dithiethyl moiety is found in bioactive compounds$^5$ such as antibacterial$^{a b}$ and hepatoprotective agents$^{2 a d}$ and pesticides.$^{2 e}$ Even more rare are the heavier analogues of 1,3-dithietaotene, 1,3-diselenetane and 1,3-ditelluretane, which typically arise from the dimerization of a handful of selenones and tellurones.$^3$ In the main group, Group 13 analogues of these heterocycles are known but remain limited in scope due to a dearth of options for their selective synthesis.$^4$

Molecular compounds of aluminium and gallium that feature a central planar M$_2$E$_2$ ring surrounded by organic substituents may be accessed by reaction of dihydride or dimethyl precursors with elemental chalcogens$^{3 a}$ or by double σ-bond metathesis with H$_2$S$^e$ or E(SiMe$_3$)$_2$. $^{a b}$ Recently Möya-Cabrera and coworkers succeeded in synthesizing a unique mixed-chalcogen Al$_2$OTe ring by step-wise reaction of stoichiometric H$_2$O and Te with a β-diketiminato aluminium dihydride.$^5$ In the rather less well-explored area of low-valent Group 13 chemistry Schnöckel et al. synthesized the cyclic compound [µ-S(Al(NEt$_3$)$_2$)]$_2$ by oxidizing an Al(i) iodide precursor with S$_8$, while Power et al. activated N$_2$O and S$_8$ with a β-diketiminate-stabilized Ga(i) compound to yield the corresponding gallium oxide and sulfdide dimers.$^7$ For boron, strained diamino-B$_2$E$_2$ rings were obtained by Forstner and Muetterties from the reaction of B(NEt$_3$)$_2$ with H$_2$S$^a$ and later by Nöth through thermolysis or photolysis of the [2 + 2] cycloaddition products of E=C=E (E = O, S, Se) with a bulky iminoborane.$^9$ Interestingly, while a theoretical investigation led by Marder identified crucial factors for the rarity of B$_2$O$_2$ rings,$^8$ such cyclic compounds can be formed by the hydrolysis of haloboron complexes,$^{9 c d}$ the dimerization of diboroxanes$^{8 f}$ and, by the controlled dimerization of a platinum oxoboryl complex.$^9 d$ Indeed, the chemistry of B–O heterocycles is predominantly the field of six-membered boroxine (B$_2$O$_3$) rings.

More recently, our group reported the convergent reactivity of low-valent boron species [[(CAAC(NC)B=B(CN)(CAAC)] (CAAC = 1-(2,6-diisopropylphenyl)-3,3,5,5-tetramethylpyrrolidin-2-ylidine) and cyclo[(CAAC)B(µ-CN)]$_4$ with sulfur and selenium to give, among other products, [cyclo-(CAAC)B(µ-S)]$_4$. The outcome of the reaction is highly dependent on the stoichiometry of the reagents used, yielding larger and smaller rings when different amounts of chalcogen were employed. We have also observed the slow, yet selective, dimerization of monomeric, N-heterocyclic carbene (NHC)-stabilized borachalcones [IMe(Bu)B=IMe] (IMe = dimethylimidazolylidine; E = S, Se) into four-membered heterocycles.$^{10}$ To our knowledge, however, unsymmetrical substituted four- and five-membered cyclic chalcogenides of boron are yet to be reported.

We have recently reported the reactivity of the N-heterocyclic-carbene-stabilized manganese borylene complex [Cp(OC)$_2$Mn=BrBu(IMe)]$^{1 a b}$ with chalcogens (S, Se, Te),$^{12}$ selectively affording a range of unusual boron chalcogenides, including a family of novel free and metal-bound boradichalcogeniranes [[Cp(OC)$_2$Mn \{κ$_1$-cyclo-TeTeB(Bu)(IMe)\} (1) and [cyclo-EEB(Bu)(IMe)] (E = Se (2a), S (2b))].$^{11}$ We now report that these complexes selectively react with a number of different transition metal borylene complexes to afford a range of unsymmetrically substituted B$_2$E$_2$ four-membered rings under mild conditions (Fig. 1).

Results and discussion

Borylene complexes of the group VI metals figure among the most studied metal-stabilized sources of borylene fragments.$^{14}$

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In recent years, borylene complexes of chromium, molybdenum and tungsten have been shown to engage in metal-to-metal, metal-to-carbon" and metal-to-nitrogen" borylene transfer, in C–H activation and in [2 + 1] addition reactions. Towards our study of the reactivity of boradichalcogeniranes with low-valent boron fragments, the sterically protected borylene complex [(OC)5Cr=B(Tp)] (3) (Tp = 2,6-bis(2,4,6-trimethylphenyl)phenyl) was deemed a good starting point. Treatment of boraditellurirane complex 1 with one equivalent of 3 in toluene allowed us to isolate cyclo-[C(IMe)B–Te–B(Tp)–Te] (4) after recrystallization from a toluene/pentane mixture (yield: 24%). High-resolution mass spectrometry (HRMS) and single-crystal X-ray diffraction analysis allowed us to identify 4 as an NHC-stabilized 1,3-ditelluraryl-2,4-diborarene arising from the insertion of a [BTp] fragment into the Te–Te bond of 1. To the best of our knowledge, 4 represents the first example of such a four-membered B2Te2 ring (Fig. 2).

This new species features two resonances in its 11B NMR spectrum (δ = –33.0 and 61.1) which differ considerably from those of both starting materials (δ = –2.0 (1) and 147 (3)), as expected for its unsymmetrical substitution pattern. The new signal at –33.0 ppm is attributable to the sp3-hybridized tetrahedral boron atom that is coordinated by an IMe ligand (B2), while the peak at 61.1 ppm can be assigned to the BTp moiety. The new B–Te distances are different for both boron centers. Indeed, the TpB1–Te bonds are significantly shorter (2.153(2) and 2.139(2) Å) than the corresponding (Bu)IMeB2–Te distances (2.358(2) and 2.331(2) Å), likely owing to Te-to-B π-donation, which is not present in the case of the sp3-hybridized B2.

Borylene complex 3 was also reacted with the Se and S compounds 2a and 2b under the same conditions as for 1. Interestingly, in these cases the Se and S analogs of the four-membered B2Te2 compound 4 were only observed as minor products, which we were unable to isolate, however we were able to obtain a few crystals of the selenium-containing analog of 4, which allowed us to determine a solid-state structure and

![Fig. 1](image1.png) **Synthesis of boradichalcogeniranes (and a manganese adduct thereof) from a manganese borylene complex, and reaction of these chalcogenides with chromium borylene complex 3.**

![Fig. 2](image2.png) **POV-Ray depictions of the crystallographically determined structures of compounds 4 (top), 5a (bottom left) and 5b (bottom right).** Atomic displacement ellipsoids depicted at the 50% probability level. Hydrogen atoms and ellipsoids of peripheral groups omitted for clarity. Selected bond distances (Å) and angles (): 4: B1–C(Tp) 1.569(3), B1–Te1 2.153(2), B1–Te2 2.139(2), B2–C(Bu) 1.637(4), B2–C(IMe) 1.624(5), B2–Te1 2.358(2), B2–Te2 2.331(2), Te1–B1–Te2 102.7(1), B1–Te1–B2 82.38(9), Te1–B2–Te2 91.23(9), B1–Te1–B2 83.33(9); 5a: B1–C(Tp) 1.585(5), B1–Se1 1.919(5), B1–Se2 1.921(4), B2–C(Bu) 1.641(7), B2–C(IMe) 1.630(7), B2–Se1 2.115(4), B2–Se2 2.106(4), Se1–B1–Se2 119.4(3), C(Tp)–B1–Se1 120.3(3), C(Tp)–B1–Se2 120.2(3), C(Bu)–B1–C(IMe) 112.7(3), Se1–B1–Se3 105.4(2), B2–Se3–Se2 102.7(1), Se3–Se2–B1 100.7(2).
confirm its connectivity (see ESI†). In these reactions, after crystallization from a THF/pentane mixture, the five-membered rings \( \text{cyclo}[-(\text{tBu})\text{(IMe)B}-\text{EE}-\text{B(Tp)}-\text{E} \ (E = \text{Se}) \text{ and } S \text{ (5b})] \) were obtained (yield 22% in both cases). In the 1,2,4-triselena-3,5-diborolane 5a, the \(^{11}B\) NMR signals for the two boron atoms were found at 6.2 and 72.1 ppm. Similarly, in 5b, they are found at 7.7 and 66.2 ppm. The five-membered rings 5a and 5b are likely to arise from the initial formation of Se and S analogues of 4, which then undergo ring expansion using the starting materials or reaction intermediates as sacrificial chalcogen sources. While \(^{11}B\) NMR monitoring of the reaction showed the formation of other boron chalcogenide species – as is predicted from the stoichiometry of the reaction – these byproducts could not be identified. 5a and 5b can however be reliably crystallized from the reaction mixture and isolated.

In the solid state, 5a is structurally comparable to the three previously reported examples of crystallographically characterized B5Se5Se non-cluster five-membered rings.\(^\text{12}\) Interestingly, it represents, to our knowledge, the first example of such a cycle with an unsymmetrical substitution pattern. The planar sp\(^2\)-hybridized TpB site features B–Se distances (1.919(5) and 1.921(4) \( \text{Å} \)) that are close to those reported by Tokitoh and coworkers in a symmetrical five-membered ring of selenium and sp\(^3\) boron.\(^\text{13}a\) In contrast, on the tBu(IMe)B side of 5a, the B–Se distances (2.115(4) and 2.106(4) \( \text{Å} \)) are analogous to those found in triselena-1,3-diborolanes with sp\(^3\) boron atoms.\(^\text{16\text{a}c}\) Unfortunately, while we were able to grow crystals of 5b, their poor quality, combined with the absence of heavy elements, did not yield crystallographic data of a precision that would allow us to discuss structural parameters. Instead, the single-crystal X-ray diffraction analysis only allows us to confirm the connectivity and the substitution pattern in the molecule.

Since the insertion of TpB fragments into 2a and 2b did not allow us to selectively synthesize unsymmetrical B-Se dichalcogenadiboretane rings, we elected to react these precursors with other borylene sources. Thus, the Group 6 aminoborylene cogenadiboretane rings, we elected to react these precursors allowing us to selectively synthesize unsymmetrical B-Se analogues of 5b. The solution \(^{1}H\) and \(^{13}C\) NMR spectra of 7a and 7b, \(^{11}B\) NMR signals were found at −6.1 and 49.8 ppm. The solid-state structure of 7b is comparable to that of 7a, with (Me\(_3\)Si\(_2\))NB–Se bond distances of 1.844(4) and 1.855(3) \( \text{Å} \). The B(tBu)IMe–B–S distances of 1.990(3) and 1.998(4) \( \text{Å} \) and a B–N bond measuring 1.440(5) \( \text{Å} \) (Fig. 3).

2a and 2b also react with [Cp(OC)\(_2\)Mn=B(\text{Bu})] \([\text{Cp} = \text{cyclopentadienyl} \ (8)\text{,}^{\text{12a}}\text{a manganese borylene complex that has a rich reactivity}^{\text{12}}\text{a} \text{ and that is a precursor of } 1, 2\text{a and } 2\text{b. While we were not able to obtain high-quality crystals from this reaction, HRMS of the isolated products revealed a formula consistent with } \text{cyclo}[-(\text{tBu})\text{(IMe)B}-\text{EE}-\text{B(Tp)}-\text{E} \ (E = \text{Se}) \text{ and } S \text{ (9b)})], \text{ arising once again from the transfer of a borylene fragment (tBuB) from } 8 \text{ to } 2\text{a and } 2\text{b. The solution } \text{H} \text{ and } \text{C} \text{ NMR spectra of } 9\text{a and } 9\text{b are consistent with the formula assignment from HRMS, revealing a } 1:1 \text{ ratio of IMe and two inequivalent tBu groups. The } \text{B} \text{ NMR resonances of } 9\text{a (}\delta = −10.8 \text{ and } 77.5\text{ and } 9\text{b (}\delta = −3.6 \text{ and } 72.9\text{) reveal a similar environment for the sp}\(^3\) \text{ boron atom as that in the corresponding four-membered rings } 7\text{a and } 7\text{b, which leads us to}

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**Fig. 3** Reactions of boradichalcogeniranes 2a and 2b with borylene complexes 6 and 8 (top). POV-Ray depictions of the crystallographically determined structures of compounds 7a (bottom left) and 7b (bottom right). Atomic displacement ellipsoids depicted at 50% probability level. Hydrogen atoms and ellipsoids of peripheral groups omitted for clarity. Selected bond distances (Å) and angles (°): 7a: B1–C(tBu) 1.628(6), B1–C(IMe) 1.631(6), B1–Se1 2.116(5), B1–Se2 2.112(5), B2–N 1.442(7), B2–Se1 1.957(5), B2–Se2 1.958(5), B1–Se1–B2 71.2, Se1–B2–Se2 102.9(2), B2–Se2–B1 81.8(2), Se2–B1–Se1 92.8(2); 7b: B1–C(tBu) 1.632(5), B1–C(IMe) 1.633(5), B1–Se1 1.998(4), B1–Se2 1.990(3), B2–N 1.440(5), B2–Se1 1.855(3), B2–Se2 1.844(4), B1–Se1–B2 80.8(2), B1–Se2 104.0(2), B2–Se1 81.2(2), S2–Se1 81.4(2).

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postulate that products 9a and 9b are indeed the cyclic compounds \( \text{cyclo-[(Bu)(Me)B–E–B} \text{(Bu)–E]} \).

Finally, 2a was also found to react with the macrocyclic complex \( \text{cyclo-[(CAAC)BCN]}_4 \) (10). This metal-free tetrameric borylene was previously shown to be a useful source of the corresponding monomer \( [(\text{CAAC})\text{BCN}] \) in its reaction with Lewis bases and to generate one of the few reported examples of cyclo-[BSe], complexes by reaction with borylene was previously shown to be a useful source of the new 1,3-diselena-2,4-diborolanes. This reaction gives unprecedented synthetic access to unsymmetrically substituted 1,3-dichalcogen-2,4-diborolanes and 1,2,4-dichalcogen-3,5-diborolanes. We have thus reported the synthesis of heterocycles featuring unsymmetrical boron centers in sp\(^3\)-sp\(^3\) and sp\(^3\)-sp\(^2\) hybridization combinations. Given the lack of methods for the synthesis of such unsymmetrical compounds, this approach will provide us with a useful platform to study the properties and applications of these unusual heterocycles.

**Conclusions**

In conclusion, we demonstrate that borylene fragments can be inserted into the E–E bonds (E = Te, Se and S) of boradichalcogeniranes. This reaction gives unprecedented synthetic access to unsymmetrically substituted 1,3-dichalcogen-2,4-diborolanes and 1,2,4-dichalcogen-3,5-diborolanes. We have thus reported the synthesis of heterocycles featuring unsymmetrical boron centers in sp\(^3\)-sp\(^3\) and sp\(^3\)-sp\(^2\) hybridization combinations. Given the lack of methods for the synthesis of such unsymmetrical compounds, this approach will provide us with a useful platform to study the properties and applications of these unusual heterocycles.

**Conflicts of interest**

There are no conflicts to declare.

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**Notes and references**


