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Concurrent tandem catalysis enabled by nanomechanical motion in heteroleptic four-component dual-catalyst machinery†

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When the basic ligand **3** was added to the heteroleptic three-component slider-on-deck $[Ag_3(1)(2)]^{3+}$ (sliding frequency $k_{298} = 57$ kHz), it operated as a moderate brake pad ($k_{298} = 45$ kHz). Due to motion in the resulting four-component slider-on-deck $[Ag_3(1)(2)(3)]^{3+}$, both ligand **3** and silver(I) were continuously exposed and became catalytically active in a concurrent tandem Michael addition/hydroalkoxylation.

Inside multicellular organisms, enzymes catalyze a gamut of reactions, ranging from simple to cascaded¹ and concurrent tandem reactions.² In many cases, enzymatic activity critically depends on protein mobility, *e.g.*, for substrate binding or product release.³ If enzymes with multiple components are concerned, then mobility may even involve cooperative motions of distinct parts for achieving rate and efficiency increase,^{4,5} as convincingly demonstrated by the ATP synthase.⁶

Only recently, chemists have been able to mimic such spectacular enzyme capabilities by developing multicomponent catalysts,^{7–9} but few have succeeded to connect catalytic function with intrinsic motion.¹⁰ Herein, we illustrate the suitability of four-component machinery to act as a dual catalytic effector for concurrent tandem catalysis with both processes occurring in one solution. Dual catalytic activity of a single slider-on-deck – instigated only by its dynamics – has not yet been realized.¹¹

In earlier work, we demonstrated that the superior action of nanorotors and slider-on-deck systems as catalysts in both base-¹² or metal-catalyzed¹³ reactions depended crucially on their motional speed. Notably, the speed correlated with the ability of the machinery to free the catalyst¹² or product¹³ (reducing product inhibition). Such effect is conceptually

different from static liberation of a catalyst as used in switchable catalysis.^{14,15}

In detail, the four-component slider-on-deck was constructed from deck **1**,¹⁶ biped **2**, silver(I) ions and the chelating base **3** as shown in Scheme 1 (for synthesis, see ESI,[†] Chapter 1). The resulting catalytic machinery $[Ag_3(1)(2)(3)]^{3+}$ exhibited a stochastic sliding motion that in parallel liberated the silver(I) sites and base **3** for catalysis. The resulting dual-catalyst machinery proved to be



Scheme 1 (a) Chemical structure of ligands **1–3**. (b) Transformation of the three- into the four-component dual-catalyst machinery. Both organobase **3** and the silver(I) centers are liberated due to the sliding motion in $[Ag_3(1)(2)(3)]^{3+}$, which enables concurrent tandem catalysis. A & B represent the substrates, C denotes the intermediate product and D the final product of the concurrent tandem reaction.

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Fig. 2 Comparison of partial ^1H -NMR spectra (600 MHz, CD_2Cl_2 , 298 K) of **3**, silver(I) phenanthroline complex $[\text{Ag}(\mathbf{3})(\mathbf{11})]^+$, three-component slider-on-deck $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{3})]^{3+}$, and four-component slider-on-deck $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{3})]^{3+}$.

both slider-on-deck systems, one can deduce that $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{3})]^{3+}$ is also in motion despite the addition of ligand **3**. By comparison of the shifts of proton signals i' , j' -H in **3** ($\delta_{i',j'} = 3.75, 3.83$ ppm), $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{3})]^{3+}$ ($\delta_{i',j'} = 3.33$ ppm) and reference $[\text{Ag}(\mathbf{3})(\mathbf{11})]^+$ ($\delta_{i',j'} = 3.21$ ppm), similar upfield shifts were observed for both complexes attesting that **3** is situated in the shielding pocket of the silver(I) phenanthroline sites (Fig. 2). As expected from product liberation in moving rotors,¹³ ligand **3** in $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{3})]^{3+}$ shows a shift that lies in between those of free **3** and $[\text{Ag}(\mathbf{3})(\mathbf{11})]^+$, indicating that some is liberated by the motion in the four-component slider-on-deck.

By means of variable temperature (VT) ^1H NMR spectroscopy, we determined the exchange frequency of both slider-on-deck assemblies. In case of the three-component $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})]^{3+}$, the 4-H proton signal split at -60 °C into two peaks (ratio 2 : 1) due to freezing the sliding of biped **2** across deck **1** on the NMR time scale (Fig. 3). Using WinDNMR,¹⁸ the ^1H NMR traces were simulated over a large temperature range, providing the activation data as $\Delta H^\ddagger = 45.8$ kJ mol $^{-1}$, $\Delta S^\ddagger = 0.7$ J mol $^{-1}$ K $^{-1}$ and $\Delta G_{298}^\ddagger = 45.6$ kJ mol $^{-1}$ as well as the exchange rate $k_{298} = 57$ kHz. Contrastingly, in the four-component slider-on-deck $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{3})]^{3+}$, the proton 4-H signal split already at -40 °C. The kinetic analysis afforded $k_{298} = 45$ kHz along with the activation data $\Delta H^\ddagger = 47.8$ kJ mol $^{-1}$, $\Delta S^\ddagger = 5.4$ J mol $^{-1}$ K $^{-1}$ and $\Delta G_{298}^\ddagger = 46.3$ kJ mol $^{-1}$. As a result of the addition of **3** to $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})]^{3+}$, the motion thus slowed down by 21% at room temperature and even more at lower temperature. This trend is



Fig. 3 Experimental (left) and simulated (right) partial VT ^1H NMR spectra (CD_2Cl_2 , 600 MHz) of (a) $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})]^{3+}$ and (b) of $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{3})]^{3+}$.

Table 2 Product yield in both concurrent and sequential reactions catalyzed by $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{3})]^{3+}$

Time (h)	Yield of 6 (base cat.) (%)	Yield of 8 (Ag^+ cat.) (%)	Yield of 10 (dual seq. cat.) (%)
0	0	0	0
2	7	17	2
4	18	35	7
6	25	47	12
8	29	53	15
10	33	61	21
12	35	64	27
14	38	67	34

a result of the higher positive activation entropy of $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{3})]^{3+}$ that is increased due to the liberation of **3** into solution in the rate-determining step. As in the rate-limiting step the biped must depart from one silver(I) binding site to kick out the base **3**, both the silver(I) and **3** are temporarily available for catalysis.

To investigate whether both catalytic units in $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{3})]^{3+}$ are simultaneously active we tested for concurrent base and silver(I) catalysis. Thus, the slider-on-deck $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{3})]^{3+}$ and reactants **4**, **5**, and **7** were combined (1 : 30 : 30 : 30) in CD_2Cl_2 for running both transformations parallel (Scheme 2a). The reactions were monitored by ^1H NMR over 14 h at room temperature, showing formation of the silver(I)-catalyzed product **8** (67%) and base-catalyzed product **6** (38%) as displayed in Table 2. The data demonstrate that the base-catalyzed formation of **6** is slower than the silver-catalyzed reaction affording **8**.

Since dual activity of this slider-on-deck is increased in comparison with the static model compounds, we probed a concurrent tandem catalysis consisting of a Michael addition followed by hydroalkoxylation (see Scheme 2b). Hence, the slider-on-deck $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{3})]^{3+}$ and reactants **4** & **9** (1 : 30 : 30) were mixed in CD_2Cl_2 . The kinetic profile of this reaction was monitored at room temperature by ^1H NMR over 14 h at 2 h intervals. ^1H NMR spectra showed 34% of **10** after 14 h (black curve in Fig. 4).

Closer inspection revealed several surprising features. Initially, the base catalyzed reaction is the rate-determining step in the tandem reaction to **10**, because intermediate **10'** created by



Fig. 4 Yield of **10** with time in the tandem reaction catalysed by $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{3})]^{3+}$.



base catalysis does not show up in the ^1H NMR. Only, when product **10** of the tandem base- and silver(i) catalysis had formed to more than 15%, then intermediate **10'** (Scheme 2b) became visible. Furthermore, the kinetic profile of the tandem reaction showed an increasing rate the more product **10** had formed (Fig. 4), indicative of some autocatalytic effect. To check whether it is the final product **10** that impacts on the rate, the slider-on-deck $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{3})]^{3+}$, reactants **4**, **9** and product **10** were mixed in a 1:30:30:3 ratio in CD_2Cl_2 . Now 59% of **10** (49% after subtracting 10% of the initially added **10**) was afforded after 14 h with higher rate (initial rate at $t = 0$: $\nu_0 = 2.8 \mu\text{M s}^{-1}$) than in absence of product **10** ($\nu_0 = 2.1 \mu\text{M s}^{-1}$) (Fig. 4). This effect is attributed to the competitive displacement of base **3** at the silver(i)-loaded phenanthroline by product **10** as it may act as ligand as well. Thus, in presence of sliding motion and 1 equiv. of **10**, more base **3** is released.

In conclusion, we report a three-component slider-on-deck assembly $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})]^{3+}$ with a sliding speed of $k_{298} = 57 \text{ kHz}$. Addition of amine **3** to the slider-on-deck converted it into a four-component dual-catalyst machinery $[\text{Ag}_3(\mathbf{1})(\mathbf{2})(\mathbf{3})]^{3+}$ with a reduced sliding speed ($k_{298} = 45 \text{ kHz}$). The sliding motion in the machinery instigated two simultaneous events that enabled concurrent tandem catalysis: (a) liberation of base **3**, and (b) exposure of the silver(i) sites, so that they could act synergistically¹⁹ as dual catalyst in the two-step synthesis of **10**. Thus, the present system portrays a lucid example of unleashing multiple catalytic functions instigated by a single nanomechanical motion within artificial catalytic machinery.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

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