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A Nanospheric Polyhydrido Copper Cluster of Elongated Triangular Orthobicupola Array: Liberation of H2 from Solar Energy

Rajendra S. Dhayal, Jian-Hong Liao, Yan-Ru Lin, Ping-Kuei Liao, Samia Kahlal, Jean-Yves Saillard, and C. W. Liu*,

Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: An unprecedented air-stable, nanospheric polyhydrido copper cluster, $\left[Cu_{20}H_{11}(S_2P(O^iPr)_2)_9\right](\mathbf{1}_H)$, which is the first example of an elongated triangular orthobicupola array of Cu atoms having C_{3h} symmetry, was synthesized and characterized. Its composition was primarily determined by electrospray ionization mass spectrometry, and it was fully characterized by ¹H, ²H, and 31P NMR spectroscopy and single-crystal X-ray diffraction (XRD). The structure of complex 1_H can be expressed in terms of a trigonal-bipyramidal [Cu₂H₅]³⁻ unit anchored within an elongated triangular orthobicupola containing 18 Cu atoms, which is further stabilized by 18 S atoms from nine dithiophosphate ligands and six capping hydrides. The positions of the 11 hydrides revealed by low temperature XRD were supported by a density functional theory investigation on the simplified model $[Cu_{20}H_{11}(S_2PH_2)_9]$ with C_{3h} symmetry. $\mathbf{1}_H$ is capable of releasing H2 gas upon irradiation with sunlight, under mild thermal conditions (65 °C), or in the presence of acids at room temperature.

ransition-metal hydride complexes are attractive because I of their fascinating structural and bonding aspects for synthetic and theoretical chemists^{1,2} and also play an important role as key intermediates in various heterogeneous and homogeneous catalyses³ with significant contributions in hydrogen storage.⁴ Copper hydride, a hexagonal Wurtzitetype structure,⁵ was the first reported binary metal hydride.⁶ Its application in hydrogen storage technology is limited by its pyrophoric nature, as it decomposes above -20 °C. Subsequently, efforts have been directed to the development of various Cu(I) hydrido complexes with lower (mono-, di-, or trinuclear) or higher (hexa- or octanuclear) nuclearities stabilized by phosphines, pyridines, and N-heterocyclic carbene (NHC)-type ligands. Surprisingly, none of these copper hydrides contains both capping and interstitial hydrides.8 Some of them have been utilized in various catalytic reductions and hydrogenations.

A series of air-stable Cu(I) clusters stabilized by dichalcogen donor ligands (L) as well as a hydride at their center have been successfully developed by our group in recent years. 10 These clusters can be represented as $[Cu_8HL_6]^+$, a tetracapped tetrahedral Cu framework, and $[Cu_7HL_6]$, a tricapped tetrahedron; the hydride position in the latter was unequivocally proved by neutron diffraction. Encouraged by a recent report of a subnanometer-sized Cu cluster, Cu₈(C₇H₀N₂S)₄, ¹¹ which is a part of topical research project on thiolate-passivated Au (Ag, Cu) nanoclusters¹² fabricated via wet-chemical borohydride reductions, we assumed that more of these nanosized Cu clusters stabilized by S-donor ligands could be generated if excess borohydrides were added into our original copper hydride cluster synthesis. Surprisingly, instead of the isolation of quantum-sized nanoclusters, a total of 11 hydrides were successfully incorporated into a Cu₂₀ cluster to give $[Cu_{20}H_{11}(S_2P(O^iPr)_2)_9]$ (1_H), the first elongated triangular orthobicupola array of 18 Cu atoms encapsulating a [Cu₂H₅]³⁻ ion. An elongated triangular orthobicupola framework, which is one of the 92 Johnson polyhedra 13 and comprises of eight triangular faces and 12 quadrilateral faces in ideal D_{3h} symmetry, has not been realized in any elemental clusters prior to this study. ¹⁴ In addition, the neutral copper hydrido complex [Cu₇H{S₂P(OⁱPr)₂}₆] (2_H) was isolated. 1_H and 2_H are air- and moisture-stable solids, and we have also found that 1_H can release H₂ gas under mild thermal conditions, upon irradiation with sunlight, and by reactions with acids at ambient temperature.

In a typical synthesis, 1_H was prepared in 48% yield by the reaction of a mixture of NH₄[S₂P(OⁱPr)₂] and [LiBH₄·thf] with Cu(CH₃CN)₄PF₆ in tetrahydrofuran (THF). In addition, 2_H was isolated in 10-15% yield. Compound 2_H can also be synthesized in higher yield (73%) by the reaction of a Cu(I) salt, $NH_4[S_2P(O^iPr)_2]$, and $[BH_4]^-$ in a 7:6:1 molar ratio. The chemical composition of 1_H was first determined by positiveion electrospray ionization mass spectrometry (ESI-MS), and its structure was established by single-crystal X-ray diffraction (XRD) (Figure 1). Figure 2 shows the most intense mass peak at m/z 3198.5 (calcd 3198.8), corresponding to the molecular weight of neutral 1_H, whereas peaks in the lower and higher mass ranges could be attributed to the fragment $[Cu_{19}H_9\{S_2P$ $(O^{i}Pr)_{2}_{9}^{+}$ (m/z 3132.6) and the adduct $[Cu + Cu_{20}H_{11}\{S_{2}P (O^{i}Pr)_{2}_{9}^{+}$ (m/z 3262.3), respectively. The theoretical isotopic pattern of 1_H shows a great resemblance to the experimental one (Figure 2 inset). In the solid state, 1_H is air- and moisturestable. In solution, it is moderately stable at temperatures below 15 °C; in polar solvents (e.g., CH₂Cl₂, chloroform) it decomposes into 2_H at room temperature after several weeks,

Received: February 12, 2013 Published: March 11, 2013

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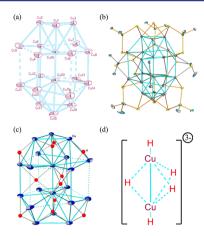


Figure 1. (a) An elongated triangular orthobicupola framework of 18 Cu atoms with solid and dashed (weak interaction) edges encapsulating a Cu₂ unit. Ellipsoids have been set at 50% probability. (b) A Cu₂₀ cluster shielded by nine $[S_2P(O^iPr)_2]^-$ ligands. The isopropyl groups have been omitted for clarity. (c) Structure of the Cu₂₀H₁₁ moiety in $\mathbf{1_H}$. (d) Structure of the anchored $[Cu_2H_5]^{3-}$ unit. Color code: elongated triangular orthobicupola framework, cyan; Cu, purple; H, red; S, yellow: P, blue; O, green.

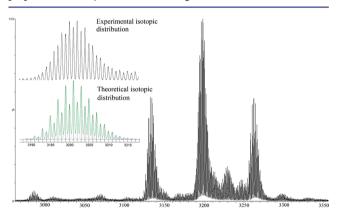


Figure 2. ESI mass spectrum of $\mathbf{1}_{H}$. The insets show the experimental and theoretical isotopic distributions.

but it is stable in nonpolar solvents (aromatic). Consistent with the XRD results (vide infra), the ¹H NMR spectrum of 1_H shows two broad singlet hydride resonances at -0.99 and 2.80ppm with an integration ratio of 6:3, but an expected resonance at ~1.4 ppm integrating for two more hydrides unfortunately overlapped with a broad doublet due to the methyl protons of the dithiophosphate (dtp) ligands. When the solvent was changed from CDCl₃ to toluene-d₈, all of the hydride resonances were shifted downfield by ~0.5 ppm, and the resonance for the last two hydrides clearly appeared at 1.88 ppm (Figure S1A,C in the Supporting Information). The -OCH- protons of the dtp ligands give rise to two resonances at 4.83 and 4.99 ppm with an integration ratio of 3:6, in line with the two chemical shifts identified in the 31P NMR spectrum at 110.3 and 110.0 ppm, respectively. These data suggest the existence of two types of dtp ligands in the cluster. This assignment was confirmed by the ¹H NMR spectrum of the deuteride analogue $[Cu_{20}D_{11}(S_2P(O^iPr)_2)_9]$ ($\mathbf{1}_D$), which shows ligand resonances identical to those of 1_H except for the lack of hydride resonances (Figure S1E). The ²H NMR spectra of $\mathbf{1}_{D}$ in CHCl₃ {toluene} show three broad singlets at -0.89{-0.48}, 1.54 {1.96}, and 2.88 {3.39} ppm with an integration ratio of 6:2:3 (Figure S1B,D), strongly indicating that the 11

hydrides fall into three types in the title compound. These hydride shifts are significantly different from that of $\mathbf{2}_H$ (4.20 ppm), where the presence of the hydride was also confirmed by the resonance at 4.15 ppm in the 2H NMR spectrum of $[Cu_7D\{S_2P(O^iPr)_2\}_6]$ ($\mathbf{2}_D$) (Figure S2A–C).

As shown in Figure 1, the polyhedral molecular structure of $\mathbf{1}_H$ consists of 20 Cu atoms, nine dtp ligands, and 11 hydrides. Even though the location of H atoms by XRD is difficult, the 11 hydrides in $\mathbf{1}_H$ could be approximately located from the Fourier difference map and refined freely. Whereas attempts to grow single crystals of suitable quality for neutron diffraction were unsuccessful, a density functional theory (DFT) geometry optimization of the model cluster $[Cu_{20}H_{11}(S_2PH_2)_9]$ was able to confirm the hydride positions determined by our low-temperature XRD study. Actually, the X-ray and DFT structures were in good agreement (see the relevant parameters in Table 1).

Table 1. Selected Structural Parameters and 1H NMR Hydride Shifts for $1_{\rm H}$ and the Corresponding DFT-Computed Values

			¹ H NMR shifts (ppm)		
	bond lengths (Å)		exptl		
	X-ray	DFT	CDCl ₃	Tol-d ₈	calcd
Cu− <i>μ</i> ₃ -H	1.55(6)-1.81(8)	1.681- 1.774	-0.99	-0.55	-1.03
$\text{Cu-}\mu_4\text{-H}_{\text{tet}}$	1.61(6)-1.83(6)	1.622- 1.740	1.46	1.88	2.20
$\begin{array}{c} \mathrm{Cu-}\mu_{4}\text{-} \\ \mathrm{H}_{\mathrm{square}} \end{array}$	1.76(7)-1.88(7)	1.778- 1.896	2.80	3.32	4.54
Cu _{outer} - Cu _{outer}	2.5284(9)- 2.7542(7)	2.536- 2.773	_	-	_
$\begin{array}{c} {\rm Cu_{outer}}- \\ {\rm Cu_{inner}} \end{array}$	2.6458(8)- 2.8595(7)	2.670- 2.809	_	-	_
$\begin{array}{c} \text{Cu}_{\text{inner}} - \\ \text{Cu}_{\text{inner}} \end{array}$	2.3079(7)	2.370	-	-	-

The architecture of 1_H reveals that an outer cluster of 18 Cu atoms forming an elongated triangular orthobicupola encapsulates an inner Cu₂ unit (Figure 1a). The skeleton of metal atoms can also be described as an elongated trigonal prism wrapped by a distorted hexagonal prism in which the two prisms share a common threefold axis. The 18 Cu atoms are further stabilized by nine dtp ligands, with each quadrilateral face of the two triangular cupola moieties and each alternative quadrilateral face of a distorted hexagonal prism capped by a dtp ligand in a tetrametallic tetraconnective (μ_2,μ_2) pattern (Figure 1b). The Cu- μ_2 -S distances are in the range 2.2745(14)-2.4404(13) Å. Additionally, each of the eight Cu_3 triangles, except the two situated on the C_3 axis, is further capped by a hydride ligand. The $Cu-\mu_3$ -H distances range from 1.55(6) to 1.81(8) Å. Astonishingly, an anchored $[Cu_2H_5]^{3-}$ unit is settled inside the elongated triangular orthobicupola in such a way that the two Cu atoms and two of the hydrides are located on the C_3 axis and the remaining three hydrides are located at the vertices of an equatorial triangle perpendicular to the C_3 axis. Hence, the five hydrides form a unique trigonalbipyramidal arrangement around the central axial Cu2 unit (Figure 1c,d). Whereas each of the two hydrides at the axial positions appears to reside in a tetrahedral cavity formed by one inner Cu atom and an outer Cu₃ triangle through which the C_3 axis passes, each of the three equatorial hydrides is located almost in the middle of a Cu₄ pseudosquare formed by the two inner Cu atoms and two outer Cu atoms forming an edge the hexagonal prism. To the best of our knowledge, this represents the first four-coordinate hydride with a nearly square-planar geometry. Furthermore the simultaneous presence of six capping and five interstitial hydrides in 1_H is not only the first one in copper hydrides⁸ but also potentially provides an excellent model for hydrogen diffusion in metal lattices, such as the permeability of hydrogen in bulk Pd. The $Cu-\mu_4$ - H_{tet} bond distance range, 1.61(6)-1.83(6) Å, encompasses the reported value of 1.73 Å for a four-coordinate hydride in binary CuH¹⁷ and is comparable with range of Cu-\mu_4-H_{square} bond lengths [1.76(7)-1.88(7) Å]. As a result, each inner Cu atom is tetrahedrally coordinated to four hydrides, and the outer Cu atoms display two kinds of coordination environment: six have trigonal S₂H coordination, and 12 have tetrahedral S₂H₂ coordination.

The central hexagonal prism of $\mathbf{1}_{H}$ is distorted in such a way that each hexagon displays alternating Cu–Cu distances: three short [2.5277(8)–2.5570(8) Å] and three long [3.0445(9)–3.252(1) Å]. Therefore, the ideal D_{3h} symmetry of a regular elongated triangular orthobicupola is reduced to C_{3h} . All of the edge distances of each Cu₃ triangle are shorter than those of a Cu₄ quadrilateral, and the Cu–Cu distances associated with proximal hydrides are significantly shorter than those without hydrides in the neighborhood. The distance of 2.307(1) Å between the two inner Cu atoms approaches the shortest value reported for NHC-stabilized dinuclear copper hydrides.^{71,n} The average intraligand S···S bite distance is 3.43(5) Å.¹⁸

The cluster size of $\mathbf{1_H}$ is similar to that of the recently reported phosphine-protected $\mathrm{Au_{20}}$ cluster, 19 which was also synthesized by borohydride reductions. Its structure reveals that the $\mathrm{Au_{20}}$ core is generated from the fusion of two incomplete icosahedral $\mathrm{Au_{11}}$ building units. The diameter of the spherical unit ($\mathrm{C_{methyl}}$ ···· $\mathrm{C_{methyl}}$) in $\mathrm{1_H}$ is ~ 17.8 Å, which is on the same order of magnitude as those of the smallest nanoparticles. The solid-state structure of $\mathrm{1_H}$ has a unique packing sequence of Cu atoms that can be viewed as an ABBA pattern normally identified in mixed metal oxide solids. 21

Geometry optimization of the $[Cu_{20}H_{11}(S_2PH_2)_9]$ model carried out at the BP86/Def2-TZVP level gave a structure very close to C_{3h} symmetry. 15 Not only is this structure fully consistent with the experimental X-ray data, but the computed hydride NMR chemical shifts are in fairly good agreement with their experimental counterparts (Table 1).22 These results provide certainty about the hydride locations in 1_H . The natural orbital population analysis indicated that the hydrides of the encapsulated [Cu₂H₅]³⁻ unit have similar charges of -0.67, while the charge of the outer μ_3 -hydrides is smaller (-0.51), indicating that the latter are more covalently bonded, as confirmed by a comparison of the sums of the Cu-H Wiberg indices (WIs) ($\sum Cu - \mu_3 - H = 0.566$; $\sum Cu - \mu_4 - H_{tet} = 0.361$; $\sum Cu - \mu_4 - H_{\text{square}} = 0.372$). Interestingly, the μ_4 - H_{tet} hydrides are bonded to the inner Cu atoms much more strongly than to the outer ones (WI = 0.199 and 0.054, respectively). Whereas the Cu_{inner} – Cu_{inner} separation is the shortest of all the Cu–Cucontacts, the corresponding WI (0.061) is among the lowest (WI range = 0.021-0.108). Although these values are only indicative at our level of calculation, they show that the Cuinner-Cu_{inner} interaction is not different in nature from other Cu(I)-Cu(I) (i.e., $d^{10}-d^{10}$) interactions. This is in line with the fact that optimization of free [Cu₂H₅]³⁻ at the BP86/Def2-TZVP level leads to dissociation.

Any material targeted for hydrogen storage must not only be stable at room temperature but also require only a small amount of energy to release H₂ spontaneously.²³ To demonstrate the potential utility of as-synthesized 1_H, H₂ evolution experiments were performed under thermal, solarenergy, and acidic conditions. Preliminary variable-temperature ³¹P and ¹H NMR studies suggested that 1_H was converted into 2_H accompanied by H₂ evolution (4.49 ppm) when the temperature was raised from 65 to 70 °C for 10 min (Figure S3A,B). The residual solution from thermolysis of 1_H also contained a phosphine byproduct of the dtp ligand, which appeared at 4.5 ppm in the ³¹P NMR spectrum. Under direct irradiation with sunlight, similar observations were also found within 3 h, and a lower H₂ evolution rate than for thermolysis was revealed. Furthermore, the evolution of H₂ was authenticated by analysis using a gas chromatograph equipped with a thermal conductivity detector. 1_H is capable of releasing 3.5 equiv of H₂ per molecule at temperatures above 65 °C (Figure S4A). Upon acidification with either a weak (acetic) or strong (hydrochloric) acid, 1_H can release 2.5 and 8 equiv of H₂ per molecule, respectively, at room temperature (Figure S4B,C). Hence, conversion of 1_H into 2_H with concomitant H₂ evolution in a single-step process can be accomplished under mild thermal conditions, making 1_H a feasible system for the hydrogen industry as well as for catalysis of hydrogenation.

In summary, we have prepared and characterized an air- and moisture-stable nanospheric copper polyhydride whose structure is an elongated triangular orthobicupola array of 18 Cu atoms enclosing a $\left[\text{Cu}_2\text{H}_5\right]^{3-}$ ion. The latter yields not only an unprecedented, Cu_2 -centered trigonal-bipyramidal arrangement of five hydrides but also a hitherto unknown nearly square-planar geometry for each of the three equatorial hydrides. The salient feature of this new polyhydrido copper cluster in releasing H_2 gas under exceedingly mild conditions suggests its importance as a model for the design of new materials for hydrogen storage and hydrogenation catalysis.

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

S Supporting Information

Synthesis details, spectra, crystallographic data (CIF), computational studies, and complete ref 15 (as SI ref 3). This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org. CCDC 922321 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for $\mathbf{1}_{\mathrm{H}}$.

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was supported by the National Science Council of Taiwan (NSC 100-2113-M-259-003). J.-Y.S. thanks the Institut Universitaire de France for support.

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